SHOOTING AND SALMON FISHING

A. GRIMBLE

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HINTS AND RECOLLECTIONS

BY

A. GRIMBLE

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ILLUSTRATED

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

		PAGE
A Little too Keen	*to face*	18
Anxious Moments	„	20
Various ways of Gun-carrying	„	44
Ditto ditto	„	46
Ditto ditto	„	48
Penny Dinners	„	66
A Death Trap	„	72
Kiteing	„	86
Stook Shooting	„	90
Ptarmigan on Snow Slip	„	110
Frozen Out	„	132
Muff's Work	„	168
Putting a Strain on a "Sulky Brute"	„	196
The Spey-Cast, No. 1	„	204
Ditto No. 2	„	206
Ditto No. 3	„	208
Minnow Fisher	„	236
Making the best of it	„	246

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LIST OF CONTENTS.

PREFACE.

		PAGE
CHAPTER I.	—GENERAL REMARKS . . .	1
,, II.	—GROUSING	50
,, III.	—CAPERCAILZIE. — BLACKGAME. — PTARMIGAN.—ROEDEER . .	93
,, IV.	—SNIPE AND WILDFOWL . .	125
,, V.	—LOW GROUND SHOOTING. — PARTRIDGES. — PHEASANTS. — HARES AND RABBITS . .	141
,, VI.	—SALMON FISHING . . .	175

PREFACE.

NUMEROUS friends have suggested the publishing of a volume on sport with rod and gun, and en couragement is given me to make the attempt by the remembrance of how often good men and good dogs may be seen to fail to hunt certain corners and patches of very well-stocked beats and covers; so pen is put to paper in the hope there may yet remain some bits of unworked or not very closely hunted ground for me to range over. Should it be my bad luck to appear to poach on the preserves of others, apologies are freely offered, coupled with earnest assurances that the trespass has been committed in ignorance. Putting forward no claim to have been present at the making

of any extraordinary large bags, and leaving out some twenty years of earlier sports, it has been my good luck during the past ten years to see some fifty thousand head of Scotch and English game brought to bag; and a "prood mon" am I to say that the whole of this sport has been enjoyed entirely through the kindness of numerous good friends. In addition to the game, some fifteen hundred salmon must also be added, and as both have been obtained in all parts of Great Britain—from Cornwall to Caithness—opportunities have been offered of seeing a great variety of shootings and shooters, of fishings and fishermen. Twice in the following pages a few lines have been introduced almost word for word from "Deerstalking," and I was emboldened to do so by the fact that the book is now six years old, and during that time many good sportsmen have expressed their entire concurrence with the views therein put forward.

Where so many friends have been so kind it would be invidious to dedicate this book to any one

or two in particular. Even as these lines are penned comes the sad news of the unexpected death of one of the kindest and most valued—poor Henry Spencer Lucy, of Charlecote Park. In addition to being one of the very best of gentlemen, he was absolutely, whether with rifle or gun, the most experienced sportsman I have ever known; and many are the hints on stalking and shooting for which I am indebted to him. These pages are therefore dedicated to all the kind friends who have ever given me a day with rod or gun, and my hope is that each and all will take them as a very trifling acknowledgment of kindness and hospitality that I fear can never be adequately returned.

A. GRIMBLE.

Union Club,
Brighton.

SHOOTING AND SALMON FISHING.

HINTS AND RECOLLECTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

COMMENCING with the termination of that interregnum which falls on the shooting world between the first of February and the twelfth of August, we will suppose it is the end of July; and ever since the close of the previous season all keen sportsmen will have had periodical attacks of anxiety as to the prospects of the one to come. In our variable climate the weather of the past five months, coupled with the reports received from foresters and keepers in many a lonely glen, will have been the foundation of

numerous happy talks between brother sportsmen; but by this date, whether it relate to Highland or Lowland game, each lover of the gun will be able to form a fairly accurate idea of the sport awaiting him; and, moreover, those who are to be afoot on "the twelfth" will already be smelling heather, though there are perhaps but few who will join in the fervent wish expressed by a City gentleman who had just made a fortune and meant spending it, and who exclaimed to his friends one sultry day at the end of July: "Well, thank goodness, in less than three weeks I shall be in Scotland on the moors and amongst the longtails!"

As in a book of sport the word sportsman must inevitably be frequently used, the author thinks it as well to begin by stating what in his humble opinion a "good man" should be.

Firstly,—In carrying and using a gun he should be absolutely safe for every one with him in the field, himself included.

Secondly,—He will never count the pleasure of

a day's sport by the number of head killed; and he should be able to derive keen enjoyment from the mere fact of having a gun in his hands with a chance of using it, if even only now and again; and it should ever be reckoned the greater the difficulties to be overcome the greater is the pleasure to be had from surmounting them.

Thirdly,—He should be able to sleep in a shepherd's bothy and hob-nob with the fleas, and to dine with their happy owner off porridge washed down with cold spring water; but likewise he should be able to "go nap" through sixteen courses of the best, and neither of the above-named events, or any happy medium, should affect his walking or his shooting the next day.

Fourthly,—He should be sound in wind and limb, untirable, undefeatable, and quick to take advantage of all chances presenting themselves; and in every shot there is ever the right and the wrong moment in which to pull the trigger.

Fifthly,—He should not be a jealous shot; he

should not fire long shots; and in cover he should make it a hard and fast rule NEVER to fire low shots. What are long shots, each one must, to some extent, settle for himself; but using forty-three grains of Schultz and a full ounce of number five shot, with "Field" loading and a very slight choke, the author tries to limit himself to shots that are not over fifty yards, and up to that distance he has satisfied himself at the plate it is entirely his own fault if misses be made.

In cover shooting or when driving it is easy to judge the chosen distance, almost to a yard, by fixing on some object on either side; and should game pass wide of these points, stedfastly resolve to let it go by unmolested.

Sixthly,—He should be punctual to a moment, and he should be quiet, and not raise his voice louder than needful. He should walk the pace his host sets, and pride himself on keeping *exact line*. The host should regulate his pace to one which he sees is pleasant to his friends, and if there be a very slow

man in a party walking in line, it can be arranged not to tire him or make a funeral march for the more active ones, by placing the slow walker in the middle of the line, leaving the quicker goers to do the wheeling. This plan can of course only succeed in countries broken up by hedges, and would be useless on moorland beats, which often go straight ahead for a mile or more; but as fast walking is always against making a good bag, the slow man unwittingly does everyone in the field a good turn, and in all cases his company is greatly to be preferred to that of the fast and jealous walker, who is for ever racing in advance of the whole of the other guns.

Seventhly,—If fault has to be found with either guest or servant, the host should not furiously rage before the whole field; and a guest, except in cases of reckless shooting or dangerous carrying of guns, should never say anything unless directly appealed to.

Eighthly,—He should never "forget" to take out a shooting licence, or fail to "make friends" with

all keepers, gillies, beaters, ponies, and dogs. He should take a good supply of cartridges wherever he goes, and if it be exhausted, then let him be punctilious to return what he borrows; for there are shooters who make it a practice not to take enough, and supply the deficiency by borrowing from the cartridge bags of their friends, and never offer to replace them. Such soon get known and laughed at for their petty meanness, and no one would wish to be classed with them.

Ninthly,—He should be unselfish, and willing to sacrifice his own sport, if thereby several others are benefited, and the following story well illustrates our meaning. Some seasons since, when on a visit to Mr. Edward Lawson, at Hall Barn, in Bucks, it happened Mr. Archie Steuart-Wortley was one of a cheery party made up of six guns. In the course of the day, we came to a beat near "the march" (even when writing of English sport, we prefer the use of the Scotch word), which held a great many pheasants, numbers of which would at times fly back,

and thus go right off the shooting. For this reason it was always necessary to have a reliable gun with the beaters. The post fell to Wortley that day, and as the cover about to be beaten was one of low gorse, bracken and broom, leading into Dipple Wood, the guns standing in front could watch the beaters coming from the very first start, and each saw their friend could have killed some sixty birds whilst advancing on them ; but *not one single shot did he fire*, for that day a strong wind was behind the birds, and as each one rose it flew forward, and like a good man Wortley sacrificed the poor pleasure of killing a lot of easy shots, and by allowing the birds to develop their speed, by the time they reached the shooters posted in front they had all become "tall" ones, and offered difficult and exciting shooting. The guns out that day, besides our host, were Sir George Prescott, the late General Goodlake, V.C., Sir John Edwards-Moss and the author, and Wortley's sportsmanlike forbearance was acknowledged by all as soon as the beat was over.

It is much to be regretted so many shooters never take the trouble to master the etiquette of good form, and often the most particular men in all other ways are the greatest offenders against the sportsman's code.

It is a mistake to assert, as one often hears, that those taking to shooting late in life cannot learn to be good men, so far as relates to their actions in the field; although it is quite correct that they seldom blossom even into fairly good marksmen.

Anyone who is really anxious to learn may, in the course of a few seasons, become well versed in all the courtesies of the shooting field; but unless broken in from boyhood, it is rare to see any short service gentlemen actually excel.

What happy days hundreds of us have passed with the friendly keeper, during our holidays, and before we were allowed to join in the pursuit of real game—days resulting in but a few young rabbits to make a pie for the house, some wood-pigeons, a jay, a hawk, and a stoat, but altogether making up

a bag regarded with rapture! Poor as such sport may now seem, those however were the days that taught us to be good and careful sportsmen. We have often read that for the first few days the absolute novice should begin to shoot with powder only in the gun, but whatever the merits of the plan may be, we have never yet met with the lad of the period who would condescend to give this method a trial.

Perhaps the most common fault to be met with now-a-days is the hopeless inability of so many to distinguish between *meum* and *tuum*. Numbers of these delinquents do not sin from jealousy, but from pure incapacity in the excitement of the moment to see anything but the object to be shot at.

At some Scotch grouse drives, where the boxes have not been more than fifty yards apart, we have had neighbours who have fired at birds passing them on the far side of our box. To mention this is often a matter of giving offence; but these sort of shooters are the ones of all others to pepper one, and as it is better to cry out before being hit than afterwards, it

becomes wiser to risk the offence, and if taken in bad part, it can generally be put right over a glass of wine at dinner.

The author remembers being present at a grouse drive, where the conformation of the ground forced the boxes to be barely fifty yards apart. As soon as placed in position, on turning to the left, the welcome sight of an old hand met his eyes; on the right was a lad who had just confided to us that this was his very first grouse drive. However, he had been next us in an earlier drive that day, and appeared to handle his gun in good style, and to know where he was shooting, so our mind was made up to trust him, and as soon as the birds began to come we blazed away free from anxiety, till suddenly bespattered with shot, and turning quickly, it could be seen at a glance the unwelcome visitors had come from the gun beyond the youngster on the right. Wondering how the lad had escaped being hit we did not hesitate to cry the sinner by name.

At the end of the drive the culprit, whom

we will call A., without even waiting to pick up his birds, came striding towards us clearly very angry, and the following conversation took place :—

A. I say, G., dash it all ! What on earth do you mean by yelling out like that ! I vow I never even shot near you, and it's not fair to shout a fellow's name all down the line, and it's precious rough on me, as I'm nearly a stranger here !

G. Well, A., it's no good being in a rage. I'm sure you *did* fire right into us—ask Donald (the loader) : however, no harm is done, but for goodness sake do be more careful in future."

A. Good gracious, G.! you must have taken leave of your senses, for no one *can* be more careful than I am ; and besides, my shots could not have hit you and missed C. (the lad), who was in a direct line between us.

G. All right, A., you keep your opinion ; I shall stick to mine. So we will let the matter drop and say no more about it.

A. (still very angry and turning to C., who was placidly picking up his birds).—Hi! C., come here a moment, will you?

C. (coming up). Well, what is it?

A. Why, G. says I shot into his box, and I could not possibly do that without hitting you, so please just say straight out if any shots did come your way.

C. Well, A., since you put it like that, as a matter of fact I have got five pellets in my back!—only flesh wounds though, and as they don't hurt it does not matter!!

A. collapsed and apologized like a man, and we all had a good laugh at his expense. C.'s wounds gave him no trouble, and he was richer by the five pellets and a very handsome cigar case A. sent him to commemorate the event, and from that day forth A. could always be passed as safe. Poor C. afterwards confided to us when asked why he had said nothing, that he was silent simply because he had always heard he must expect to be hit when grouse driving!

This story well shows how an excitable man when

fixing his eye on the bird to be shot at, becomes absolutely blind to every other object around him; and the author believes there are but few of us who cannot recall to mind some risky shots fired in youthful days.

Personally we are thankful to say that, with one exception, we never put lead into anything not meant to receive it; but for all that, we are often haunted by the recollection of firing a dangerous shot, when quite a boy, which to all appearances ought to have severely peppered a very kind uncle.

The only time we did hit that which was not intended, was after an experience of twenty years, and then we had the sad misfortune to wound a very good setter of the late Mr. Spencer Lucy's at Corrour.

Poor Belle! it was one of the few faults she ever made, and nearly cost her dear. She crept on after a covey of running grouse, and following them round a hillock unsighted the shooter, and her head came into the line of fire fully thirty yards from the spot where she had last been seen, just as the trigger was

pulled: the bird fell dead, and she was badly hit, but eventually recovered to set many more grouse; but though she did not turn in the least gun-shy, her nose was never afterwards so good.

Recently we experienced another instance of far more inexcusable rashness than could be imputed to our grouse-driving friend. A gentleman invited us to shoot, whom we had only met the day before, whilst mutually visiting at a country house; in all other respects a most charming companion, he soon showed himself to be something uniquely dangerous in the field. No matter when or where anything rose, shoot at it he must, and did.

In the first beat he placed the author about forty yards away from him in a bare grass field, and outside a small spinney; a hen pheasant shortly rose from the cover ditch, and flew towards us, too low to shoot at, and barely even topping one's head. At that instant, to our horror, mine host was seen making ready to shoot, and discarding all ceremony we fell flat on the grass, and both barrels were discharged harmlessly.

Astonished and enraged at his proceedings, we nevertheless jumped up and killed the bird as it was going away, and then, not being on sufficiently intimate terms to swear at him, a bolt was made over a style, and meeting the next gun we told him what had happened. He laughed, and only said, "Dear me, how wrong of us all to forget there was a stranger out; we ought to have warned you. Well! *he always does it!* No good saying anything; but none of us who know him ever go near him, and DON'T YOU!"

This was not very pleasant hearing, the more so as the host shortly joined us, saying he hoped he had not fired a dangerous shot, but really he had not seen me in the least; and this was most courteously put, although we had stood in a bare grass field hardly forty yards apart!

He then invited us to follow him, saying there would be a good few birds this time, and we could again stand next to each other. Not knowing how to escape, we obeyed orders, and soon came to the fatal corner, and stood as before. It was as plain

as possible that if we did not mean to be hit, the only chance of safety was in never taking eyes off this dangerous host.

The beat began, and again a pheasant rose in front of us, but the first flutter of the wings was a signal for us to take a seat on the fallow. Again our friend wasted his cartridges, and once more we were up in time to make a kill ; and at that corner, in this style, some twenty birds were bagged. For the whole of the rest of the day we had to stand next this terrible man, and never once did he appear to see us sit down or jump up, or in any way notice he was regarded as an undesirable neighbour.

Although the first few of these reckless shots had caused considerable anger, the excitement of having to keep such a very sharp look out began to please us, and eventually the ludicrous side of the matter so grew on us, that before the end of the day we were actually enjoying it. The other guests also drew near and followed the example set, and anything more laughable than to see the two friends on either

side of their host, tumbling down when his gun went up, and jumping up when his gun went down, could hardly be seen out shooting. Once, however, safely at home, "previous engagements" were always to the fore when further invitations arrived from that quarter.

The inevitable end came at last—it was wonderful it had not come quicker—and our good friend has now retired from the world of sport—not, however, without at last having hit something, only it was a beater, not a hare, and the little mistake (a trifle of some seventy pellets in the poor man's thigh) having cost him about two pounds per pellet, he gave up in disgust at the stupidity of beaters in getting in the way; and the pheasants at any rate must be condoled with on the loss of a true friend. The moral of all this is, if out with a dangerous man *never take your eyes off him* if he is within shot, and also, go not forth with him twice, for such days as described are but poor fun, and unless short of shooting invitations—the first should always be the last. We

cannot refrain from citing two more ludicrous instances of the untrained and too enthusiastic shooter. On the first occasion a keen but not young beginner was driving with a friend in a brougham to a shooting meet; on nearing the cover many pheasants were to be seen running off the roadside into the ditches, and our novice slipped a cartridge into his gun and took a shot out of the window at a running cock! The bird escaped, but not so the brougham, which was speedily deposited in the ditch the pheasant had made for; no one was hurt, and as soon as the two occupants of the vehicle were got out of it the only result worth mentioning, in addition to a broken pole, was a somewhat animated conversation between the two friends.

We also once watched a sportsman who, thinking himself unseen, potted some dozen birds just inside the cover as they were running down to the corner, and to give him his due, he rigorously followed the advice offered by Mr. Punch's Frenchman, and always "waited till they stopped!"

A LITTLE TOO KEEN

As each murder was committed he ran to the cover-side and picked up the victim, and returning to his stand deposited it complacently at his feet. Quite a nice little heap was accumulated in this way, and when the beat was over and as the rest of the guns came up, he proudly cried to the keeper, "Just send a boy to take my birds, please," and turning to us—"I've picked 'em all for myself, and there was not a runner in the lot!" This was true enough, and we began to think whether such conduct should not be reported to head-quarters; however, as our friend was in all other ways quite an extra good fellow nothing was said; but by sundry hints and winks he was made to understand there had been a witness of his atrocities, and we are glad to say he is now a fair sportsman, and even a moderate shot.

It is impossible to help marking the hap-hazard carelessness often witnessed at some large shooting parties: one moment the barrels of Mr. A.'s full-cocked gun stare you straight in the face, and quickly getting out

of that dauger, all seems safe till it suddenly dawns on you Mr. B.'s gun is covering your legs, and having promptly avoided any chance of being lamed for life, lo-and-behold Mr. C.'s gun is found pointing steadily at your stomach, till at last, made half nervous and wholly angry, shooting well becomes impossible. The author has always noticed that those who have ever used muzzle-loaders are safer companions than those whose shooting career has dated from the day of the breech-loader; for every one who used a ramrod had to face a certain amount of danger, and though an indefinite number of fingers, thumbs and hat-rims were annually blown off, the care each shooter was then taught to take of himself made him safer for his friends, and we think there were fewer people "pelleted" in the muzzle-loading days.

In our humble opinion there is far too much forbearance shown to dangerous men, and many an accident would be averted if those not knowing how to manage their weapons were politely but plainly told of their misdeeds. It is fortunate that shots

ANXIOUS MOMENTS.

are not bullets, for if everyone was killed or maimed who was hit each season, the fatalities would be counted by hundreds. We do not shoot with more careless shots than the average run of shooters, but rarely does a season go by but what we see one or two people wounded. That which takes place in one man's experience will repeat itself with others, and it only requires a multiplication sum to make up a long list of "peppered" ones each season. It is a very terrible matter to be shot at quite close quarters, for it usually entails severe and lasting after-effects, if not immediate loss of life, and it would be better for anyone to be hit by a solid bullet than to receive a charge of small shot at but a few yards from the muzzle of the gun. Provided, however, the victim is well away from the culprit, and that he escape the exact centre of the charge, there is nothing very painful or dangerous in being shot; and if only the eyes are undamaged, the rest of the body can take a "good few" pellets without being much the worse. At thirty-five yards' rise we

had thirteen pellets of No. 6 put into head, face, neck, and throat—the sensation was that of a heavy box on the ear (and for a perfect knowledge of that feeling we are indebted to a brutal schoolmaster); but after stanching the bleeding and washing in the nearest burn, we continued to shoot the day out, and on the following one we went to the forest and killed two stags, so that clearly there was nothing much to bother about. The whole "baker's dozen" are still carried about with us, and no annoyance is ever experienced from them, and whenever shots are buried deep in the flesh, as long as no inconvenience is caused, they should not be disturbed. A lump of tobacco placed on a shot wound, or some wool plucked off a coat and poked into it, will usually stop any ordinary case of bleeding.

When walking in line and the beat has narrowed so as to force the guns to be only about twenty yards apart, one is often assailed, as a bird rises, with a noisy "Why didn't you shoot? I waited *ever* so long for you!" the querist having just smothered

a partridge not fifteen yards right in front of you, and which by all the laws of the field was strictly your very own to have first fire at.

With a neighbour like this, it is best to put the gun under one's arm and merely say, "It is of no use our both shooting at the same bird." The kill, such as it was, has pleased the duffer, and a good man can afford to laugh at being robbed of a few shots.

When, however, that sort of thing is likely to continue all day, it is difficult to know what to advise. If between two such guns, neither of them knowing their own birds (or that it is the accepted rule for the man nearest to whom the bird rises to have first fire), it is best to try and get shifted from your place in the line, and now and then this may be accomplished by a mild ruse.

When the time comes to make a wheel, stop to light a pipe or fasten a boot-lace, and thus get left in rear of the line, and in order to save time in waiting for your position to be regained, the host will often cry to you to fall in by a short cut, and

thus at one *coup* both the too attentive friends may be got rid of.

Exasperated at this happy-go-lucky style of shooting, we have at times seen good men knock over ground game only a few yards in front of the offender, and then staring hard while reloading, flash forth looks that are tantamount to saying: "There! take that, you duffer!"

If one cannot secure a change in positions and all hints are thrown away, a *modus vivendi* may be arranged by agreeing to take it in turns to shoot; this sort of work cannot, however, be called a pleasant day's sport, and of course in good company it could never happen; but two wrongs do not make a right, and we are of opinion that when a well-trained sportsman is placed between two duffers, he should not forget his code of honour, however great the provocation.

We have assumed in the foregoing cases that the offenders sin entirely from ignorance; but at times we have seen two good shots urged by a host to punish a jealous man who has established for himself

a notorious reputation as a wilful offender and jealous shot. The sinner is placed between his executioners at a stand where there will be plenty of birds, and both concentrating their skill entirely on all game coming to the culprit, the double fire rarely fails to demoralize him, and by the time the beat is over he will have had his lesson, and a second one on that particular shooting will never be required. It is a disagreeable performance to have to incite friends to take part in, and it may be thought it would be better not to invite the jealous man at all ; but occasionally it happens he is a neighbour with whom it is for many reasons desirable to keep good friends, and who is a real good fellow in all other ways.

There are numbers of gentlemen who preserve largely, and have numerous shooting parties, but who do not really care for the sport, and know but little about it. They are fond of a country life, and like to see their friends about them and give them some shooting ; but they do not know their own "marches," and could not direct the beating of their own covers,

or even place the guns, for they have no idea where all the various rides in a wood begin, end, or lead to. These are the gentlemen who are almost sure to over-gun their covers, for the more friends they can entertain the better these kindly-hearted ones are pleased, and all details as to numbers are settled by asking the head-keeper how many he will require for such and such a wood, and according to that estimate invitations are sent out.

Now, the best of keepers is but mortal, and if the shooting be on a large scale, each gun asked will represent a gold coin of the realm for his pocket, and hence a liberal view of the required number will surely be taken, and on these shootings ten guns are always asked to do the work of six or seven. As a general rule, to ensure a pleasant day's sport, the guests should be from fifty to sixty yards apart; for if but twenty to thirty yards divide them, it becomes almost impossible for each to keep to his own bird, and under such circumstances a hot corner develops into an affair of indiscriminate banging,

and first come first served and devil take the hindmost, quickly becomes the order of the day.

On these occasions also the cry of "Let 'em rise!" is often heard, should there be one or two of the party who are known as "plasterers," and kill their birds fluttering on the top of the underwood—a truly horrible style, but one much practised by those who keep a score of what they kill. We do not say there are not exceptional circumstances where a score, if a scorer be sent out, may not fairly be kept; but as a rule we are certain it is a bad plan ever to think of such a thing. A score-keeping shooter is generally a shot picker, and may repeatedly be seen to refuse difficult chances for fear of spoiling his average, and thus he will lose a great deal of fun to gratify his vanity and enable him to say so many head were bagged for so many cartridges. The gentlemen who so liberally and kindly provide sport for their friends although they themselves care but little about it, are also frequently those who make the great mistake of letting their keepers shoot when guests are present,

and we have seen some very good keepers quite spoilt in this way, for they will generally be better shots and harder walkers than the ordinary run of visitors at such places, and speedily becoming elated at their own prowess they become "too big for their breeches," whilst should one of the gentlemen chance to be both a better marksman and better walker, the keeper will become wildly jealous; and we once, in Scotland, saw a whole day's sport reduced to a match between the two, which the amateur won very easily. Indeed, as far as shooting goes, the gentlemen as a body are, as they ought to be, a very long way in front of the keepers. It is as well that a game-keeper should be able to shoot more or less, but some of the best are very moderate performers with the gun, and rely chiefly on their traps for the destruction of all vermin.

Except under exceptional circumstances, such as a day's ferreting, and when we have known both master and man for some time and are sure of the latter's training and good manners, we usually plead

an excuse if asked to take the field with the keeper who is to shoot.

As a rule, each man thinks he kills more than he actually does, and if eight guns are called together after a hot corner, and each be asked what he has bagged and the total added up, it will generally be nearly double the number of head gathered.

During the course of a moderate day's sport—four of us tramping the fields in line—we once heard a very bad shot asked what he had killed up to luncheon-time, and, in perfect good faith, he claimed the whole bag!

Never count or let the keeper count the cartridges taken out; make sure there will be plenty, and at the end of the day do not look at the number remaining, for your own judgment will tell whether you have done well or the reverse; and, if any one should happen to be in very good form and make a long string of kills, let him not on any account boast of it, or the first time he is a little "off" he will receive a lot of chaff and, worse still, render

himself miserable by his own thoughts on his bad shooting.

The author trusts his readers will not think he is about to try and teach them how to shoot or to fish. Hints only are offered, as he does not believe it possible by pure and simple writing—no matter how long or minute the instructions may be—to teach any one to kill a bird on the wing or to drop a fly neatly on a salmon cast at the end of twenty-five yards of line. The foundation of every good shot or fisherman must always be youth combined with an ardent love of the sport, coupled with plenty of opportunities for practice. Of course, some will by nature be more gifted than others, and these are the men who come to the front.

Let us recount our own experiences as a beginner with the gun, and we do so solely in the hope they may persuade others to persevere. At thirteen we were entered at rabbits and an occasional pheasant by our uncle, Mr. Rothwell Pounsett, who then rented the shootings of Mountfield Park, near Battle, in

Sussex. As a beginner we did well, and friends and keepers were kind enough to prophesy a future for the school-boy.

Then, for several seasons the exigencies of education and army cramming did away with all chance of handling a gun, till, at the age of seventeen, an old school-fellow, Tom Powell, asked us to stay for a month from the first of September, at his father's place, Dorstone Rectory, in Herefordshire.

In those days Tom was a lively Oxford undergraduate, some few years our senior, and an excellent shot. That, alas! is thirty years ago, and Tom is now the Reverend Thomas Powell, and lives at the Rectory and follows in the footsteps of his good father, who was then our host.

We arrived at the Rectory with plenty of powder, shot, wad and caps, and a fourteen-bore double-muzzle-loader by Forsyth ; and in the smoking-room, on the eve of St. Partridge's Day, we hinted somewhat plainly that birds would be scarce by the end of the month! In this case pride did indeed have

a fall, for during the month, in which we two killed two hundred brace of birds over dogs, incredible as it may sound, our individual share of that bag was but *five* partridges! Our friend gave us every chance, and we had more shooting than he had. Gun, powder, shot and charge were all changed in turn, but to no good purpose, and at the end of the month, depressed and down-hearted at our utter want of success, we were glad when the visit terminated and our adieus were made, while mentally vowing never again to take a gun in hand. A feeling came over us that it could only have been to a muff as great as we were that the late "Ginger" Stubbs once addressed his damning praise. Said he to poor "Jones," who had been fishing for a compliment, "Jones, my dear fellow, you charge your gun well, you ram well, you cap well, you cock well and hold well," and here Jones was smiling all over his face, "but what the devil becomes of your shot is something no man can tell." Dearly as the sport was prized, sadly and completely we were compelled to

own that as a shooter we were a most thorough and dismal failure. A fortnight passed away, and during that time our discomfiture had to some extent been softened and forgotten, when an invitation came from another good friend, the present Sir Charles Booth, asking us to stay with him at Netherfield, his place in Hertfordshire, and though our misgivings were great, we could not resist accepting. The first day of going out—*distrait*, unnerved, and shy of letting off the gun—we were content to watch our host knocking his birds over, and killing cleanly at long distances with great precision. It *did* look so easy! Why, oh why, could we not learn it? and even while bewailing our stupidity a covey rose, and to our great joy the bird FIRED AT fell dead. "Well shot!" was called; but, better than that, it flashed across our brain we should yet learn to shoot. Coached by Sir Charles, rapid strides were made from that moment, and by the time the age of three-and-twenty was reached we could well hold our own at rising game.

Driving, which was then a sealed book (1857) to great numbers of sportsmen, also proved, when first joined in, nearly as disheartening as the earlier experience at rising birds. These not very interesting *souvenirs* are only recalled from the past to inspire beginners with confidence, and to show that the greatest muff need not despair, if young, fond of the gun, and nothing is defective with his eyesight. The first and absolutely the foremost matter in shooting is to keep the eyes open. We think we hear our readers laugh and say, "Just as if anyone ever shot with his eyes shut!" Nevertheless, there are undoubtedly those who do attempt the feat. How do we know? Well, we will try to explain. All of us are acquainted with the shooter who, times without number and year by year, keeps on shooting at birds that someone else has already killed, and who does not let off his gun till the bird has actually collapsed and has commenced to fall; yet this style of shooter will continue, season after season, to claim such birds as falling to his own gun, and is quite

happy in the firm belief he has shot them, and his claim is clearly put forward in absolute good faith and unblushingly. Now, we happen to have seen several gunners of this species, and as they were well known to be clever, modest, and honourable gentlemen, who would not dream of saying that which they did not believe to be true, it puzzled us greatly for some years how such men could possibly become, to all appearance, so silly when they had a gun in their hands. At last, one day during a desperate effort to coach one of these shooters, we left our own stand at the cover side and went to load for him ; every pheasant was missed clean, and tired of seeing them go away, we turned close attention to the gunner, and at first we could hardly credit our eyes, for at each shot, just as the trigger was pulled, he tightly shut both eyes ! Here, then, was an ample explanation of the habit of shooting at birds which had been killed the second before by someone else ; for, as our shooter's eyes closed, the bird was killed, and as he opened them again

after firing and saw it falling, he naturally concluded *he* had made the kill; and if those who are notorious in this line be closely watched, what we have described will be seen to take place. It is a nervous habit and by no means so uncommon as might be supposed, and one of the hardest of all to cure.

The author is not an advocate of "taking a gun" on either moor or lowland, and although he himself has twice tried it with the happiest results, yet so many friends have told him of their unlucky experiences that it is clear great caution should be used before embarking on such a venture with a total stranger, and more often than not the money paid for "the gun," if spent on some small shooting entirely to oneself would give far more pleasure to the disburser. There are, moreover, a few regular shooting "coapers" who advertise almost weekly; they have taken several different shootings on speculation, and needless to say these are the men to whom a very wide berth should be given. On one occasion two friends and the author each replied

to three advertisements relating to three distinct shootings, and each received an answer from the same individual! Anyone taking a gun on a moor for a month or so should make sure his future host is a gentleman and a good sportsman, and stipulate that the party be a bachelor one; for the presence of a solitary lady shut up in a shooting box with four men is somehow or other depressing and undesirable. Moreover, if there are a plurality of guns and each brings his wife, and several ladies hitherto strangers to each other get boxed up together on a Scotch moor, ten miles from shops or neighbours, there are almost certain to be "ructions;" and small wonder either, for a duller life for ladies can hardly be imagined—botany, entomology, and mild trout-fishing are the only outdoor amusements open to them. Under such circumstances, ladies will at times take to the gun itself, and in the present day it is a fashion on the increase. Few of them, however, are "built that way," and the writer is convinced those who do shoot rarely find any real pleasure in

the matter, and as soon as they have shown us poor men they can do it if they choose, and wipe our eyes as often as they please, most are content to rest on their laurels; and this view of the case is strongly supported by the fact that never yet have two ladies been known to rent a moor to themselves and take the field day after day, and alone and unaided by male companions, endeavour to make a bag exactly in the same way that any two men friends would do. It must not be gathered from these remarks that the author is averse to the presence of ladies in shooting-boxes or in the field; on this head his sentiments, derived from very pleasant experiences, are quite of the order of the more the merrier, and the foregoing hints are only intended for the benefit of those taking "guns" with total strangers, which is a very different matter to being invited on a visit to form one of a large party of bright women and cheery men.

On the matter of guns and gunmakers the author does not intend to say much, for volumes have

already been written about them, and doubtlessly there are still more to come; and therefore on a subject so open and so much disputed about, his impressions are given with great diffidence. He goes to Stephen Grant for his weapons, and did so after visiting the shops of all the leading London gun-makers; and, in his humble opinion, at 67A, St. James' Street the prince of gunmakers is to be found. Be that as it may, we strongly advise everyone buying a gun *not* to cut his coat according to his cloth. We are sure the so-called expensive guns are cheapest and best in the end. Why should they not be? for does not a high price in other articles ensure a superior quality? Is not a brougham by Peters better than a country-made one, or a watch of Dent's superior to a cheap Swiss or American one? and in the same way one may run through numerous other articles in constant use, and as the high-priced article is ever the best, why should guns be any exception to the rule?

Therefore, we advise purchasers to harden their

hearts and "blow the expense," and have one or a pair from the maker they fancy. A gun by a good maker will easily last fifteen years, and fetch a fair price even then. The author is just discarding a pair of Grant's he had ten years ago for one hundred and ten pounds; they have had hard work each season, and have been used with heavy charges for coast shooting as well as for pigeon shooting in the spring and summer, and between them must have disposed of fully sixty thousand cartridges; but they have never been ailing, and shoot as well, and seem as sound, as the day they came out of the shop, and to all appearances are good for another ten years, and it may fairly be asked why they are parted with. The fact is, that at the end of last season, happening to stand next a friend (at a one-gun partridge drive) who carried a hammerless ejector, the author soon saw his neighbour could put in three shots for his two, and liking to keep touch with improvements established as such, he hardened his heart and ordered a pair of twelve-bore hammerless ejectors. Whitworth steel

barrels; weight, six and a quarter pounds; price, one hundred and thirty pounds.

For the old pair an allowance of fifty pounds was made, and unless some further extraordinary improvement takes place—and as long as the present explosives are used such seems well-nigh impossible—these new guns will "see him out." Let it be supposed they last fifteen years, and then the gun expenditure for twenty-five years can be added up, the total cost of the two pair, less the fifty pounds allowed, comes to a hundred and ninety pounds, or something under eight pounds a year for the use of a pair of guns for twenty-five years. Surely this is not a very great extravagance for any one devoted to a pursuit in which safety and success depends so much on the weapon. This calculation, however, is considerably over the mark, as nothing has been allowed for the value of the guns at the end of the fifteen years.

Even should money be very tight, and with most of us it usually is, surely the comfort of a safe and reliable weapon is well worth an extra pound or two

a year; and the difference in price between the dear gun and the cheap one can often be saved by a little self-denial in such trifles as cigars, cabs, etc. Pairs of guns should always be packed in one flat-shaped case —it is but little wider than the single case, and when taken where it is certain but one gun will be wanted in the field, there is always satisfaction in feeling doubly guarded in the event of a breakdown. Such a mishap has only happened to us once—not with a Grant gun—and one frosty morning in Argyllshire a hammer flew in two, and having only the one gun, and no gunsmith nearer than Glasgow, to the village blacksmith it was taken, and between us we made a new hammer which answered the purpose well enough, although not quite with the London finish on it.

Many shooters suffer from the bruising of the middle finger of the trigger-hand, and in most cases this is a matter of a badly-shaped trigger-guard, which any good maker should easily rectify. The fault lies either in the length or the breadth of the guard, and can usually be cured by sloping it, so that when the

recoil takes place, the finger slides forward instead of being struck; and yet with such simple remedies at hand many are content to go year after year in pain and discomfort, until at last a permanent enlargement of the joint, or an open wound, forces them to go to some gunsmith with a head on his shoulders, and there is hardly a case of this sort that cannot be cured.

On the matter of explosives the author thinks it also wiser to say but little. For the past twenty-five years he has used sawdust and Schulz, and during that time has not had a dozen cartridges "go puff" and barely drive the shot from the barrel, as is often to be heard of. This he attributes to taking care not only that the cartridges have been properly loaded, but have also been kept thoroughly dry; and when going on visits, if an inspection of a strange gun-room has led to the conclusion it was a damp one, then the ammunition has been removed to the butler's pantry or some other dry place. Many first-class shots, headed, we believe, by Lords De Grey and Walsingham, still use the old-fashioned black powder,

and if to this be added the fact that all gunmakers test the shooting of their guns with that explosive, it must be conceded "villainous saltpetre" is in front of the nitro compound for giving absolutely more certain and uniform results. Judging from a great number of shots fired at the plate, I do not put the difference greater than three per cent. in favour of the black powder: *i.e.*, in every hundred nitro cartridges there will be found three which give unaccountably small results on the plate, while the whole hundred of black powder ones will be as nearly alike as possible. Thus, supposing there were two absolutely perfect shooters, then the nitro man would be a hundred and fifty head of game behind the "black" man by the time each had used five thousand cartridges. In return for this difference, which would be spread over many days of sport, the nitro man will have enjoyed freedom from dirt, smoke, foul smell, noise, recoil, and perhaps headache, and personally we would prefer to accept the hundred and fifty misses than face the ills we have enumerated. The

No. 1.

No. 2.

No 3

No. 4.

foregoing is, however, based entirely on practice at the plate, but we think in the field matters would be more than equalized by the absence of smoke and the consequently greater number of good second-barrel chances offering themselves to the users of the nitro-compound.

So great, indeed, can the smoke nuisance become that we well remember, at a rabbit shoot in cover at Ragley Hall, being placed between two "black" men on a still, damp day, and, the bunnies coming fast, in a few minutes all three of us were absolutely unable to see, and had to cease fire.

We also think the nitros send the shot up to the mark slightly quicker than black powder does, and this fact enables many to make better shooting with the former than the latter, as this almost infinitesimal result often makes all the difference between shot striking the head or the tail. Whichever powder be used, *stick to it*, and do not try first a few cartridges of one kind and then a few of another, for such chopping and changing will surely spoil anyone's shooting. It

is also certain that for one marksman who remains constant to his first love there are twenty who have discarded the black beauty for the blonde; and it cannot be too strongly impressed on waverers who wish to give the nitro-compounds a fair trial, they should make up their minds hard and fast to shoot the whole season through with it, and never yet have we met any shooter doing this who has reverted to saltpetre.

When taking the field with a single companion, or in line with several, or in cover with an army of keepers, beaters and stops, there are very distinctly right and wrong ways of carrying a gun, and an endeavour has been made to illustrate all the usual ways of so doing.

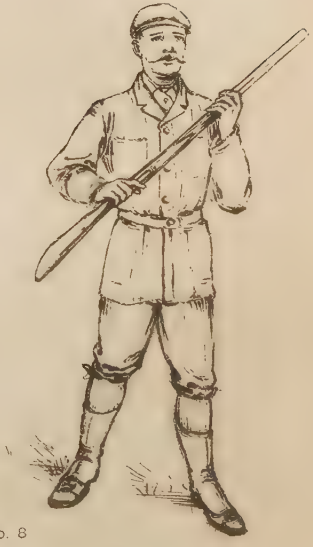
Nos. 1 and 2.—Neither of these positions is fatiguing, and both of them are very prepared ways of carrying; but, unless out alone or on the extreme left of the line, neither of them is safe for others.

No. 3.—Is safe and pleasant when walking in line, or posted in cover, but not so in going from

No. 5.

No. 6.

No. 7



No. 8

beat to beat in file or in groups ; the hammers should then be reversed, and the trigger-guard turned to the sky as in No. 4. Unless this is done, the muzzle of a gun carried as in No. 3 will point full into the faces of those coming in the rear, and, wherever there are several people together, No. 4 is absolutely the safest way of carrying.

No. 5.—Is safe and pleasant if walking in line or leading a file ; but, needless to say, highly dangerous if thus held in a crowd, and the author knows of a case where a party passing along a narrow ride in a wood, and one of the rear guns carrying his weapon as in No. 5, the hammers were caught by a bough, and the gun was exploded, with the result of laming for life the unfortunate shooter in front.

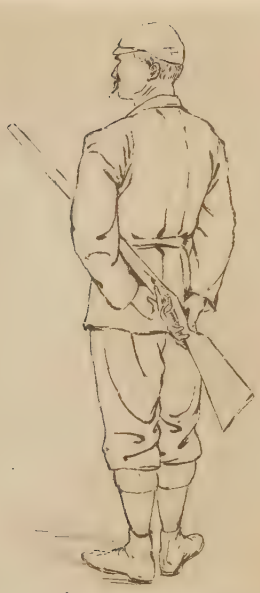
No. 6.—Is an example of how not to do it, for should the foot slip, the shooter will have no power to keep the gun in its place on the shoulder, and a lurch to one side will send it flying, and bury the muzzles in the earth ; and we have been witness of two cases of bulged barrels from explosions so caused.

Nos. 7 and 8.—Both excellent positions and the two best to take when advancing on game in line, and expecting at every moment to shoot.

Nos. 9, 10, 11 and 12.—These are what may be called fancy ways of carrying, and all are to be condemned. Nos. 9 and 10 are in our opinion most awkward ways of carrying, and if those who adopt this style will only allow their fingers to play about nervously over the triggers, they will have solved the problem of how to be specially trying to the nerves of their friends. Of Nos. 11 and 12 ladies have been heard to say, "Oh! doesn't Mr. Heartbreaker look picturesque with his gun like that?" But neither of these ways is safe or handy—two considerations which should outweigh all thoughts of the picturesque.

The drawing of cartridges at the end of every beat, or when having to surmount the smallest obstacle, is not advised. Many shooters, however, do this, and it is impossible to find fault with an excess of caution; but, unless a very bad place has

No. 9.



No. 10.

No 11

No. 12.

to be negotiated, it appears a somewhat unnecessary performance, and as if the sportsman were not quite sure of his ability to handle his weapon with safety. Whenever the cartridges are removed, they should either be kept in the hand or the breech left open, so that it may not be forgotten to reload, as may often be seen.

In the act of shooting, the weight of the body should always be thrown on the left leg, for it is impossible to shoot well with the right foot in front; and when game rises whilst walking, and the right foot is the forward one, let it not halt there while attempting to shoot, but allow the left foot to follow on, and as it comes to the front, throw the body slightly forward and bring the gun to the shoulder in one motion.

CHAPTER II.

GROUSING.

THERE are five different ways of shooting grouse: finding them by dogs, walking in line, driving, kiteing, and stook-shooting, so let us suppose August has come.

Those having moors of their own will do well, if they can spare the time, to take up their abode in the North some time during the first week of the month, for thus they will avoid the crowded and late trains of the few days prior to the twelfth, and also get the chance of some good walks to condition them for the opening day. Long strolls over the heather with the keeper and the dogs, or a trip to a hill loch for a dish of trout and a flapper or two, all help to make the first dash at the grouse ten times more enjoyable than if quite out of condition.

Should the shooter incline to be actually "tubby," then a short course of Banting will do him good, and for ten days let him be a stranger to milk, sugar, potatoes, bread, butter, and beer, and if taking strong exercise, he will lose about a pound a day; but as soon as ten or a dozen pounds have vanished, he should relax his abstinence, and as long as he is in hard work he will not get fat again.

During the first fortnight of the season the weather is often very hot and close, and there will be plenty of shooters quite out of condition. Judges, solicitors, bankers, brewers, merchants, and Stock Exchange men are almost sure to be so if in a large way of business, and of a certain age; and from these lucky ones come numbers of moor-renters and first-class sportsmen, and although someone sings "a merry heart goes all the day," the duration of the merriment must ever depend on the absence of fatigue; and whoever the shooter may be, let it be impressed on him not to overdo it at starting if he is not quite fit; best for him to begin late, or stop early, or rest for

three hours in the middle of the day—and short rests are of but little use to the really tired man—than to come home beaten to a standstill, for likely enough that will unfit him for enjoyment for some days to come. No one can show his best form with the gun when really tired, for hand and eye cease to work as one, and plenty of birds, and easy chances too, will escape from an A 1 shot when he is leg-weary and exhausted.

For the first few weeks of the season take the moor in light marching order. A suit of thin tweeds, a flannel shirt with nothing under it, light shoes with plenty of nails and thin spats over them, is the most comfortable attire, and the old-fashioned knickers are far preferable to the smarter-looking knicker-breeches, which must always tighten on the knee or the back of the calf in going up a steep hill-side. Blisters may be set at defiance by scraping some soap off a tablet and plastering it on the stocking over the spot where tenderness is dreaded; if, however, a raw be once established, and is not covered by the sole of the

shoe, take a sharp knife and cut a good big hole out of the leather that covers the sore place, and with the pressure removed it will quickly heal, even while the wearer is out daily. In very cold or snowy weather some sportsmen smear the feet over with vaseline, and vow that the application keeps them warm all day; but those who are gouty or suffer from eczema should not try this, as it has a tendency to produce a rash. Personally we have never found any advantage in it, and the "coldest-toed" day we ever passed was when trying the experiment under wading trousers one February. Since it has become the fashion even in shooting-shoes to wear pointed toes, soft corns between the joints have become very common, and they may be cured, or, at any rate, kept in order, by placing a little absorbent cotton-wool between the toes every morning before the season begins; but it is no use doing this if the feet are likely to get wet. Do not be tempted to dress up in a kilt, as it is a difficult garment for a Sassenach to manage with propriety, and on still

days the attentions of those little pests, the midges, will soon make the unaccustomed wearer wish himself better covered. The bulk of the Scotch gentlemen, excepting for evening dress, have discarded it in favour of the less picturesque but more serviceable knickerbocker. A London chieftain or a Manchester highlander when in company with other Saxons not attired in the garb of old Gaul quickly becomes an irresistible object for jokes, and we often laugh at the remembrance of going to a ptarmigan beat one day at the end of October with a gentleman clad in tartan. He was a great friend and favourite with us all; but, in spite of that, a lot of fresh-fallen snow having covered the hill-top, the same idea seemed to suggest itself simultaneously to the whole party, and the moment a fair chance offered, not one of us was able to resist the temptation of chucking a snowball up his petticoats; and in toiling up to the steep haunt of the ptarmigan plenty of chances were offered.

In most parts of Scotland—always provided it be

dry and sunny—grouse are very easy to shoot during the first ten days of the season, and if no shooters ever grew tired the bags would be even much heavier than they are. On a really wet day it is wiser to stay at home, even if it be the twelfth, for wild birds and wild weather ever go together; also all game killed in a downpour is more or less spoilt for the table, while for sending away by train it is absolutely worthless. A grouse beat properly worked should be shot all day with the view of sending every covey flushed towards the ground on which a finish is to be made in the afternoon; and if that be thoroughly done, then the two hours before dusk will give the best sport of the whole day, for the birds will be feeding and no longer in coveys but in twos and threes, and young ones will lie close even while their more canny parents are put into the bag as they rise alongside of them. A beat should never end close to the march, but always finish as much as possible in the centre of the moor, for grouse driven over the march late in the day will stay to sup and

sleep and breakfast, and thus any neighbours who may hunt that way on the following day will bag many birds that do not rightly belong to their ground.

Unless with the special purpose of making a big bag, very early starts are not advisable, and if a record performance is to be attempted it should only be undertaken by those certain of being able to last out the day, as it is clearly useless to start two men off at five o'clock on the morning of the twelfth if they are likely to be dead beat at mid-day.

When writing of record bags, those made in 1843 and 1846 by the late Colonel Campbell of Monzie still remain the largest scores ever put together over dogs; and in these days of record breaking, high preserving, and big rents, it is remarkable no one has been found to surpass them. This we attribute somewhat to the rage for driving grouse, for there are certainly a good few shootings on which the attempt could be made with every chance of success. Mrs. Campbell of Monzie has kindly sent me copies of the Colonel's letters, which he wrote in reply to

several enquiries about his large bags. Here they are, and may they inspire some of our crack walkers and shooters to try and beat them:—

"Monzie Castle,

"21*st August*, 1843.

"My actual bag, carried off the moor by the ponies and creels on the evening of the 12th, was 184½ brace of grouse, 6 hares, and 5 snipes, all to my own gun. I walked all day to my points, and only once, and that was an accident, killed two birds with one shot."

"Monzie Castle,

"4*th September*, 1846.

"On the 21st August over seven dogs I bagged 191 brace of grouse, 24 hares, 1 blackcock, 1 snipe, 1 duck, and 1 rabbit—in all 205 brace of game. The birds were very wild and strong, and I consider this bag was fully equal to 300 brace on the 12th August."

There is also to be found a statement in print by "Harkaway," that one year Monzie shot 222½ brace of grouse in a day, the writer stating:—

"He was told by Col. Campbell's keeper, who handed him his muzzle-loaders, that all these birds were killed to points in the true old sporting way."

Taking, however, Monzie's best day of 205 brace of game, as vouched for in his own hand, and estimating that he was twelve hours at work, exclusive of rests, this would be at the rate of seventeen brace an hour all through the day—a really wonderful performance; and, after all, it is perhaps not so very extraordinary it has never been beaten.

Eat and drink sparingly at lunch time, and remember that salt edibles, though very appetising, cause great thirst. If the weather be hot and the shooter not fit, the temptation to take a cup of water at every crystal spring will be very great; but if resolutely resisted, the thirst will go away by degrees. If very hot and tired, then kneel at a spring, and,

holding the head well down, let the keeper take the cup of *his* flask—it will usually be the biggest out—and pour cold water on the nape of the tired one's neck; and to those who have not tried this, it can be strongly recommended as a wonderful refresher and eye-clearer.

When grouse are shot over dogs, the sport is usually shared by two guns only, and if they perfectly understand each other, it will make a great difference to the total of the bag at the end of each day. Two thoroughly trained men shooting side by side, will never both shoot at the same bird; should a single one rise, it is instantaneously recognised whose bird it is; if two get up, then usually each takes one; and if several, then those on the left belong to the left-hand man, while those on the right remain for the other gun. Now, all this reads very simple and easy to carry out, but so rapidly do birds move, and when in coveys so quickly do they shift the order of their going, that it takes long practice and much smartness, both of eye and brain, for each shooter to stick to his

own birds. In this style of shooting two good men—except when coveys rise—will never both be unloaded at the same moment, and thus no lazy birds escape, and each covey will generally yield three if not four birds to the rise. Shooters who do not know or observe these rules, may often be seen both to fire at the same bird in a covey, and then can be heard a conversation somewhat as follows :—

A. I got a brace! What did you do?

B. Oh! I got a brace too.

A. That's good—let's pick 'em up and get on.

B. (to A., who has picked up a brace.) Thanks; those are my two you've just picked up.

A. Oh, no! these are *mine*—yours must be further out.

B. Not at all; I'm certain I killed that brace, and I haven't taken my eyes off the place! Sandy, where did Mr. A.'s birds fall?

Sandy. Weel, sirs, I noticed but just the twa, and I'm thinking baith o' ye shot at the verra same each time!

The result is, ten minutes' time is wasted, and the chance of getting two brace instead of one is entirely thrown away. It is clear if this happens repeatedly during the day, two trained men will bring home nearly double the bag that will be made by two who are merely shooters and not well-broken sportsmen.

Notice also the great number of double shots a finished gunner will kill, for he will always try for the bird rising farther away from him with his first barrel, and thus he secures an easy chance with the second, at the one that has risen nearer him. The duffer, however, will kill the nearer and easier bird first, and so allow the wild rising one to become a long and difficult shot, and usually it flies off unhurt. The author has always looked back with pleasure to a score made in 1881, whilst on a visit to his old friend the late Mr. Henry Spencer Lucy, at Corrour; shooting side by side and over dogs, "in twenty-three days, eight of them very wet and only half days," so says the game-book, we bagged 902 brace of grouse, 26 brace of ptarmigan, and 117 various, or 1,973 head,

and during that time neither of us shot simultaneously at the same bird. When dogs are pointing, do not go up to them faster than your companion; many shooters will do this, and then stop and wait. If birds are sitting well, this proceeding will have no other effect than to make your friend come up panting, and thus, when the birds rise, he will not be able to shoot his best. If, however, the birds are wild, they will be off at once to the single gun, and so the companion will get no shot at all, and in each case the bag suffers. We have often heard this racing up to a point apologised for by the excuse of "Young dogs, you see, and they are not quite steady;" but if you are out to shoot grouse and *make a bag*, dogs ought to be steady, and continually racing up and shouting to them will hardly make them more so. Of course, if one goes out with the avowed purpose of schooling young dogs, that is quite another matter, for then you are dog-breaking and not seriously shooting grouse, and the circumstances are entirely altered. Try and mark the

birds that fall, reload directly, and pick up quickly with as little noise as possible, and get to work again at once. On large moors capable of taking three parties each day for the first three weeks of the season, there will often be twenty or more couples of dogs in the kennels, and in establishments like this it would be really impossible to do away with that true friend to the grouse—the keeper's whistle. On small moors, however, where two or three couples of dogs and one keeper will do all the work, it is an easy matter to abolish it, if insisted on, though but few keepers will at first like being deprived of their favourite instrument. For three seasons we had the small shootings of Ardconnell at Oban, and broke and worked our own dogs. One brace of setters was the whole strength of the kennel, and therefore they had an amount of time and attention bestowed on them which it would not have been possible to give to some fifty or sixty dogs. The whistle was never used, and rarely even had the voice to be raised, as these two dogs were broken

to work entirely to hand; and thus even when grouse and blackgame became very wild, in November and December, a certain number could yet be killed over them. It is well known dogs are so clever that as soon as they know their master they understand his very look, and we know some "doggy" men who can actually FLOG their dogs with their voices.

Speaking of small moors recalls to mind an experiment tried at Ardconnell, apparently with considerable effect. For a small shooting there was a good head of game; it was only 2,300 acres, and Sir Charles Booth and the author had it in the years 1868–69–70. The second season it yielded a hundred brace of grouse, a hundred and twenty-five brace of blackgame, and a hundred and seventeen brace of partridges, with a considerable head of various; but it is only on the three first-mentioned varieties of game that the experiment had any bearing. Happening to be at Oban in the middle of January, 1870, there was a very heavy fall of snow following on a hard frost, and thus it laid longer than usual

on the West Coast. During this period it was impossible not to notice how pressed for food were grouse, blackgame, and partridges, and thinking if the severe weather continued the birds would become very poor and weak for the approaching breeding season, an inspiration came to try and feed them; so, purchasing some unthrashed oat stocks from a farmer, the author and his keeper chose a place on the moor they knew to be a favourite haunt of game, and railed off a small square with rails high enough and strong enough to hinder cattle or sheep from reaching over or pushing them down, and then driving a stout stake in the middle of the little enclosure a whole stook was impaled on it, ears downward, and bound tightly round with cord to hinder the wind from scattering it. It was wonderful how quickly both from far and near the birds discovered the initiation of these "penny dinners," and when they had been going but three days we stalked the place one evening and found it crowded with game of all sorts. Seeing the appreciation was so great, and

the stooks being exhausted, some maize was brought and strewn round the old stook daily, and the birds soon learnt to know the food-bearer and did not fly more than a hundred yards away, and perching on a hillock would watch their meal put down and begin to return even as the keeper departed.

Donald Macdonald, who was then our keeper, always stoutly maintained this food supply, which was kept up till the middle of March, made the birds healthy and strong for breeding, and in consequence of it our birds were a little earlier in nesting that season than those on adjoining moors, and also that we had more nests and each nest had more eggs. The result was, we killed one hundred and fifty more grouse, seventy-two more blackgame, and eighty-five more partridges, or a total of three hundred and seven head in excess of the previous season. Ardconnell was sold in 1871 to Mr. Houldsworth, so that we had no further opportunity of continuing the experiments; but, though it is possible the increased bag was due to a very good breeding season, we did not think

PENNY DINNERS.

so at the time, as none of our neighbours did extra well, and certain it is that no one can do any harm by giving this a trial.

Most of the good moors are let on leases, and as soon as one becomes vacant it is at once snapped up, and thus any one renting a place that is yearly in the market can hardly expect to find a large head of game on it. Yet there are numbers of such places let each season, and the continuous change of occupants totally fails to make fresh comers shy. The demand is in fact so great, that the renters of this description of moor are almost forced into shutting their eyes and hoping for the best; and numerous and almost pathetic are the stories that are told of bitter disappointment. There are quantities of very moderate shootings in Scotland not really worth two-thirds of the money paid for them, and these are the places the shooting agents do well on; for with the advent of each season comes the renewal of the letting commission Not that we wish to write hostilely of the shooting agents, for having had dealings with two of them—Paton and

Stephen Grant, to wit—it can be testified they are honourable and businesslike people to deal with. There are, however, agents who, to put it mildly, lay the paint with no niggard hand on all places put on their books to be let; and only recently, from one of this sort, we had details sent us for a friend of a very moderate deer forest, and were boldly informed seventeen stags were got in the past season, *nine* of which were splendid *Royals!*

Any one taking a moor that has been yearly in the market, and liking it well enough to secure a lease, should at once commence to wage war against winged and ground vermin; both dwell in plenty, and too often in safety, in the North. Until winter comes the latter make but little show, and having passed the first two months of the shooting season on his moor, the lessee will often depart in the belief that for him ground vermin hardly exist. Let him, however, return when the snow is on the ground, and he will be grievously surprised at the numerous fox, stoat, and weazel tracks all over his shooting. To ensure a

successful attack on vermin, it is a good plan to give a small sum per head to those concerned in trapping, and this will often make a great difference in the number destroyed. We refuse to believe that English or Scotch keepers exist who would play their employers the dirty trick—thank goodness we have only heard of it—of asking others to send them vermin killed elsewhere to enable a claim to be made for the head price, and show it as if killed on their own ground by their own skill. It may be urged that trapping is as much a part of a keeper's business as any of his other duties, and therefore, as a matter of principle, it is wrong to pay him extra for merely doing his work. This aspect of the case we will not discuss, but any one who finds the so much per head system ensures a greater destruction of the marauders should stick to it, and not bother his head about the right or the wrong of offering this small bribe. To trap well is a matter of great skill, and no one can be very successful who has not an intimate knowledge of the senses, habits, and weaknesses of the animal to be circum-

vented. One man will spot a stoat and in twenty-four hours it will be nailed up, while another will take as many days to accomplish the same end.

As showing what may be done under the most favourable circumstances, we will relate the experiences of two of our friends on the same ground. Each had the shootings of the Island of Raasay; one, some twenty-five years past, found that if two guns on any August day killed twenty brace between them it was regarded by the natives as a remarkably good bag, and the score did not average anything like that—from ten to twelve brace being much nearer the mark. Some years afterwards—we think in 1876—Raasay was purchased by our old friend the late Mr. Herbert Wood. He well understood game preserving, and at once commenced a crusade against all vermin, and so thoroughly was this prosecuted, that two years afterwards he killed on the two opening days of the season over a hundred brace to his own gun each day, and two friends staying with him also killed large bags during the same time. The total for the season was

twelve hundred brace killed off ground which till then had never been known to yield more than three hundred brace; and there can be no doubt that this splendid result was due to hard trapping, and not to any succession of extra good breeding seasons.

Any one who is anxious in August to see what vermin there are on a moor can arrive at some sort of an idea by risking the loss of a little game, and if a dead grouse be dropped every few hundred yards when shooting by the side of any long stone dyke, and a return can be made some hours later and the birds picked up untouched, he is to be congratulated.

The best way to get up a head of grouse on a newly leased moor, is to forget the first year's rent, and a good deal of the sport; and during the first season adhere strictly to shooting no bird that does not crow; and then, as soon as this policy is rewarded by a fair head of game, let driving be commenced—no matter if the keeper dislikes it, or the ground seems to forbid it, some birds will certainly be bagged each day. Experience will show how to get more, and those

that are killed will be principally old cocks, and then the season following more birds will be found than ever were there before driving was introduced. There are still large tracts of West Coast shooting to be leased for something about four hundred a year, and we know of more than one, which, we believe, could be made to yield fully a thousand brace in lieu of the traditional two hundred and fifty.

Wire-fencing is a most certain and deadly grouse destroyer, and when following the valley of two long slopes, and the fence does not come into the sky line, a great number of birds will annually dash themselves to pieces against it.

Telegraph wires, carried across a moor, are also very destructive. In the case of the sheep fence, it should be bushed with bunches of heather tied to the top wire; or, better still, between each post should be hung a board about eighteen inches long by six wide, and though more troublesome and expensive to put up than the heather bunches, they last longer, and are not blown away by a gale The whole length of

every wire fence does not require doing in this way, as it is only in certain positions that it plays great havoc, and perhaps in several miles of fencing it will only be just here and there that the skeletons show where the fatal places are.

As illustrating how destructive a wire fence may be in certain positions, the author remembers walking by the side of one in Dumfriesshire, and in a quarter of a mile he counted more than fifty grouse skeletons; and though this fence was fully a mile and a half in length, it was only in one part that all the destruction took place.

In the matter of telegraph wires the Post Office will, if requested, hang boards on them at their own expense, and we believe their liability to do so was established in a court of law at Edinburgh, and that the late Sir Donald Campbell of Dunstaffnage brought, fought, and won an action against the Post Office on this very matter.

Grouse driving, originating in and at one time confined to Yorkshire and a few other English

counties, has of late years become almost universal in Scotland, and hardly a moor is to be found where it is not practised more or less successfully.

Although not agreeing with an enthusiastic Yorkshire friend, who vows there are more grouse in that county than in the whole of Scotland put together (and it is a fact that, on one small Yorkshire moor, *not a thousand acres* in extent, six guns in two consecutive days' driving killed 600 brace), it must be admitted the Scotch bags do not come near the English ones in their totals. But for all that, there are often very nice scores made in the Highlands, and on several occasions we have seen over a hundred brace a day scored to six or seven guns, as witness Glentromie by Kingussie; Invermark by Brechin, and Huntly Lodge, Aboyne; and that which has been lacking in quantity has ever been made up for in quality by the more difficult shots offered; for it is an undisputed fact that driven grouse are harder to kill in the Highlands than in the Lowlands; they fly faster, and offer a greater variety of shots, and thus put

the shooter to a more severe test of skill, and that fact alone is hailed with pleasure by every good man. This arises from two causes, high winds and the broken and hilly nature of the ground driven, which frequently forces the buts to be so placed as to render continuously accurate marksmanship very difficult; and though there are boxes in the North from which a good shot will kill a large percentage of grouse sent to him, there are likewise many more from which on a windy day he will not account for one in three, and often not even that. On the occasion of a grouse drive one September at Invermark, where, as soon as breakfast was over, we always drew lots for our boxes, the author drew an unlucky number, and the wind being very high, the birds came at a great pace, and flew in any direction they pleased, and but very few in proportion to what were seen came to the guns, so to pass the time we counted the shots, and it took 186 cartridges to put 60 birds into the bag. Since then the number of shots fired at other Highland drives

has repeatedly been counted, and in *windy* weather it has always cost 30 cartridges to put 10 grouse in the bag. Driving is rarely commenced in Scotland so long as the birds will lie to dogs, which will usually be till the end of August. At that period of the year, although it may appear quite calm at the shooting lodge in the valley, by the time the *hills* are reached a strong breeze will be found blowing over them, and assisted by it the grouse fly down it at a great speed and dash past the boxes at double the pace they attain on flats and lowland moors. In England also, the shooters can usually see the grouse coming for some distance, and they come pretty much in the same style of flight; but on the Scotch moors the range of vision is usually limited, and often so much so that the shooter does not sight the game till within shot, and at times he will be so placed that low-flying birds will actually not be visible till but a few yards in front of him; or again, he may find himself posted at the foot of a steep knoll, over which the birds suddenly come without the least

warning. All these drawbacks, however, combine to make the shooting of driven grouse in the Highlands difficult and exciting work.

When the ground is very hilly, many packs and coveys turn out of the beat; for when flushed in such ground and yet a long way off the boxes, they quickly vanish out of sight of the beaters, and as they cease to feel their pressure, turn to either side just as they list, and in spite of a well-advanced and extended flanking line.

As soon as placed in his box a shooter should take the bearings of those standing to right and left of him—generally there will be some stone showing above the heather, a burnt patch, a "spot of watter," or a bunch of rushes—and fixing on some such mark on either side that is clear of the adjacent buts, he should resolve on no account to shoot inside the imaginary line thus formed. Having done this, he can measure what he judges to be fifty yards on all sides of him, and this, duly impressed on his mind, will prevent him taking absurdly long

shots. In firing, he should be particular either to raise the muzzles of his gun to the sky or lower them to the heather, should he wish to cross the line of either of the guns next him. For his part, the author prefers to lower the gun, as when again putting it to the shoulder from the depressed position everyone is more likely to hold well over the mark than if the gun, having been raised, has to be dropped on to the object, such movement naturally tending to make the shooter aim low. Having already expressed an opinion on the hopelessness of trying to teach shooting by writing, it only remains to advise the novice at a grouse drive *never to hesitate.* When the birds are yet between sixty and seventy yards away, let him single out one, and at once bring the gun to his shoulder and fire. As quickly as possible let the other barrel follow, if even at a bird only a few yards in front; for as long as it is not sideways or has not passed him, it will not be "blown" by being killed at such close quarters. Anyone shooting in this style will have time to get his second gun and repeat

the performance behind him, and even if he misses with all four barrels, he will have shown better style and deserve more credit than the man who, putting his gun to his shoulder, keeps shifting his aim from bird to bird till they are on him before he has made up his mind at which to fire, and who has eventually to turn round and shoot behind him. At times the high winds play havoc with the top peats of the but, and if it be necessary to build it up a little taller, then be careful to go to windward before commencing work, or the eyes will be filled with peat dust, which will effectually prevent shooting if the birds begin to come before they are rid of the visitation.

Most Scotch keepers have still a good deal to learn in the art of making comfortable boxes, for they are usually neither sufficiently wide nor high, and there is no doubt the circular box is the best of all, as it hides the occupant from all birds coming sideways. The author remembers being out with a very fine shot who stood six feet five and was broad in proportion, and the small boxes, or rather little walls of peat,

completely put him off his shooting, both from their being too small to conceal him and from the cramped attitude they kept him in. At last he complained of this to the keeper, whose master happened to be of slight build and medium height, and therefore fairly well suited to the small buts. At first the keeper listened in silence to the big man's complaints, in the meanwhile closely eying his tormentor. Other drives took place, and still the grumbling continued, till at last the tortured one said, very humbly and without a trace of rudeness, "Well, sir, in these parts we just make the boxes for gentlemen and not for giants;" and for a long time he could not be made to understand what had been said to make the big gentleman laugh so much.

Should a good few cartridges be used in any one drive, and result in but little to pick up, do not stamp them into the peat and try to hide them, for quick Scotch eyes are sure to detect this, which will only cause more annoyance. Count and mark each bird dropped, and take care none shot in front of

the but strike you in falling, as the blow is severe; if watched, they are, however, very easy to dodge. On no account leave the but when once the drive has begun, and as soon as it is over, try and gather runners before looking for those that are certainly dead: also see that all picked up are handed over to someone who will add them to the bag, for we have seen gentlemen helping to pick up who, having collected several brace, have thrown them down in the but, and there they have been left.

It is of little use trying to drive grouse up a strong wind, and, in arranging a drive overnight it is as well, and makes all the difference to the result, if it be understood between master and man that the beat selected is to be driven according to the direction of the wind on the following morning; it may cost the driving party a longer walk to get to their places, and perhaps make them an hour later in commencing to shoot, but it will be trouble well taken. In some places it is the custom the day following a grouse drive to send keepers and dogs to range the ground

driven the day before to pick up wounded birds, but as far as our experience goes, and we have many times been one of a party on this mission, the result has never repaid the trouble. Of course, this would be different if the total on the previous day had been many hundred brace

There can be no doubt that driving in the Highlands has had a similar effect as in Yorkshire, viz., it has done the birds good, and caused them to increase and multiply, as witness especially the Glentromie shootings, where, before this was practised, the total bag of all sorts used to be considered good if it reached fifteen hundred head, whereas the same ground now yields, of grouse alone, close on six thousand head. As soon as driving is resorted to, numbers of old cocks fall to the gun which could not be taken off the moor in any other way; and also packs and coveys, which would otherwise never be introduced to each other, are brought together from long distances and thoroughly mixed up, and so an entire change of blood is assured to the whole moor. The very best of shots have at

times their bad days at driven grouse, and excuses for poor form are ever ready and numerous; and as a guide to any novice needing such, the following forty are given, all of which have been heard to be pleaded in mitigation of bad workmanship:—

1. Dust in my eyes.
2. Sun in my eyes.
3. Wind in my face.
4. They swerved as I pulled.
5. Could not see them till they were on me.
6. Never saw them till they were past me.
7. The light is so horridly bright.
8. Such a beastly dull light.
9. The box was too high.
10. The boxes are not half high enough.
11. A new gun.
12. Cartridges damp.
13. Had a letter from my wife this morning.
14. Cartridges too heavily loaded.
15. So cold I could not swing to them.
16. Never can shoot well if forced to sit in the box.

17. Caught a chill yesterday.

18. Bilious this morning.

19. Took two pills last night.

20. All the fault of that glass of port after champagne.

21. It's drinking that silly lemon squash.

22. Fingers so cold could not feel the triggers.

23. Rheumatics in my elbow.

24. A lady in the but.

25. The loader got in the way.

26. Birds out of shot.

27. Pipe on the wrong side of my mouth.

28. 'Bacca smoke in my eyes.

29. The driving seat broke.

30. Too many cigars last night.

31. That whiskey of old Smith's is not good.

32. The cook gave notice this morning.

33. Flo refused me yesterday.

34. Boots too tight.

35. Coat cuts my arms.

36. Never can shoot when Smith is next me.

37. Got a dunning letter this morning.

38. Been threatened with an action for breach of promise.

39. The eggs were hard boiled at breakfast.

40. Lost every rubber last night.

Where, from a scarcity of neighbours or drivers, it is difficult to muster enough guns or beaters for driving, and the birds have become so wild as to be unapproachable with dogs or by walking in line, then the kite may be resorted to with considerable effect by one or two friends.

Some there are who despise this method of making a bag, maintaining it is unsportsmanlike and does harm to the moor by driving the birds off it. The first point is one that must ever remain a matter of opinion, but suffice it to say there are plenty of good men by whom a few days under the kite is most thoroughly enjoyed. As to the question of harm to the moor, it may be taken for granted there is nothing in the plea, provided the kite be moderately used, and not more than a few times on each beat,

with an interval of fully ten days between the occasions. How often has everyone who has been much in the Highlands seen an eagle sail across a grouse beat, and scatter packs and coveys in all directions in mortal terror. But nevertheless, that beat, though cleared of birds for the day, will be found stocked again on the morrow. Why, then, should an artificial bird—not so large as the dreaded eagle—have the effect of driving birds ENTIRELY off a moor if shown to them but two and three times in a season?

Absolute silence is the first essential for successful shooting under a kite, for grouse are not so stupid as to fail to comprehend that men and hawks do not agree, and should they see the kite and the shooting party at the same time, they will not be long in putting two and two together, and off they will go. Indeed, so great is the intelligence of the grouse that we think if a kite were worked daily in one place for but ten days at a stretch, the birds would soon learn the difference between the sham and the

KITEING.

real foe, and in a short time would pay no more attention to the spurious one than rooks do to a scarecrow. The smaller the party engaged in this sport the better, and if two guns are out they should not walk wide apart, and the man who is carrying the game should keep well behind; with more than two guns the sport is generally unsatisfactory.

The most favourable plan of working the kite is on a hill-side across which the wind is blowing at right angles—supposing it be coming from right to left; then when near the top of the right side of the hill, send up the kite and let out line enough to allow it to be carried over the top of the ridge and show on the left side, the whole party meanwhile keeping out of sight and silent. The kite-flyer should then advance slowly till he is some three hundred yards in front of the shooters, and then come to a halt and leave the kite to swing as the wind takes it. If this has all been well done, then the birds on the left side of the hill will not have seen or heard anything to make them put their heads up till they suddenly

catch sight of the mock foe, when all single birds and coveys will steal quickly into cover and crouch. This we have often actually witnessed by crawling to the top of the hill and passing the spy-glass over patches of short or burnt heather. The guns can now silently cross the sky-line, and with one slow and steady old dog the whole party can advance. Suddenly a brace of birds rise at the very toes of one of the shooters, and if this is his first experience under a kite likely enough he will miss them both, for they will dash off, rising and falling, twisting and turning in terror, and not till they have flown some yards do they resume their natural flight; and thus, to make a good score, it is best to treat them like snipe and let them get well out before firing. Large packs never sit to the kite, but rise some way off, and if the man with it is well in front of the guns, and working quite out of sight, often in their anxiety to escape the hawk the whole of the lot will fly back directly over the guns and offer splendid rocketing shots.

No matter which way the wind blows, such a ridge as we have described can be found every day on all large moors having a square formation ; but, whatever the nature of the ground, the great art of working a kite is to allow the birds to have a good view of it some time before any chance is given them of seeing or hearing the shooting party. That being done, then from twenty to fifty brace a day may be taken off ground which would not give five brace if walked in line or shot to dogs.

Stook shooting is the poorest form of killing grouse. It is a method rarely resorted to continuously, and, more often than not, it is the result of a double desire to kill time on a wet day (the best for the purpose) and to please the farmer whose stooks are suffering. A high-lying cornfield on the edge of the moor must be the scene of operations, and it is quite good time to arrive there by one o'clock in the afternoon. Seats are made behind the stone wall of the field, and placed so that their occupants cannot shoot into each other. A stone or two is pulled from the top of the dyke,

some bracken or a sheaf of corn on the top of these, and a game-bag over all, makes a dry and easy seat to shoot from, and it must be built of such a height as not to show the shooter's cap above the wall. Places being arranged, each gun takes a seat, one keeper makes a detour and retires to the moor to one side of, and a long way behind, the cornfield, and if there is a second man out, he goes forward to some hiding-place in front of the stubble. Should birds settle near either of them, then by showing themselves they can try to put them back to the guns under the dyke, who should keep ever ready for chances. For the first half-hour the gun will probably lie across the knees while a pipe is smoked, and of course at the first moment attention is relaxed, a covey comes over the wall and passes by unshot at. Annoyed at losing the chance, the culprit now sits at the ready, and suddenly a gentle rushing sound is heard, and in a moment he finds himself literally smothered in grouse flying barely a foot over his head. It is easy enough to take a brace out of this lot, for they are slowing

STOOK SHOOTING.

in their flight, preparatory to settling on the stubble; and often after two barrels have been fired, a pack will yet alight, and then fluttering up on to the stooks one by one, will commence to feed. As this takes place the keeper on that side will quit his hiding-place and move gently towards them, and as they take flight they will usually return to the moor by the way they came. This time, however, there will be more satisfaction in taking a brace, for they are now driven birds and coming best pace, and often rise very high.

Thus for two or three hours they will come to the corn in twos and threes, and coveys and packs, till at last the shooting scares them, and instead of coming with confidence they will stop short on the heather. Then it is indeed a pretty sight to peep through the chinks in the wall and watch the movements of a big pack at quite close quarters. Clearly they are holding a consultation as to the wisdom of again seeking the tempting food; and if absolute stillness be maintained, the corn will usually win the

day, for presently the old cocks begin to strut and erect their scarlet combs, jerking their heads up and down and giving a low sort of chuckle the meanwhile, till one by one the birds are all standing at attention with their heads up, and then with one accord they suddenly rise and once more cross the fatal wall.

When once seated, no one should on any pretext quit his place or stand upright; and winged birds should promptly be stopped by another shot. Mark where each one falls, and look them over now and then, for one that is only winged will drop and lie for a considerable time to all appearance dead before making a bolt to hide under the nearest stook; and even though it has been seen to do this, one stook is so much like another, that it will be difficult to remember the right one after the lapse of an hour.

CHAPTER III.

CAPERCAILZIE.—BLACKGAME.—PTARMIGAN.—ROEDEER.

Of capercailzie shooting the author has had hardly any experience, and the little he has seen was during a visit to the late Mr. Herbert Wood, at the time he rented Meggernie Castle "by" Aberfeldy; the said "by" meaning twenty-two miles from the railway station. In two seasons we had but four days' sport at this game and but three shots, to one of which fell a fine cock of nine pounds weight. The manner of our sport was as follows: at the back of the castle was a steep and densely-wooded hill which walled in the "policies," as the Scotch call a stretch of park-like grass; this wood was some two miles in length by one in width, and there were neither paths nor rides in it. The bottom was one mass of big boulders

hidden by bracken higher than one's head, so that the going was about as bad as could be; and on a warm day, oh! how stifling it was, and how the flies did worry and bite! In this thick cover, in a seldom-disturbed seclusion, the capercailzie dwelt, in company with a few blackgame and some deer of all sorts.

When it was beaten, a certain number of guns were told off to come through with the beaters; others kept forward at the foot of the hill, and two armed with rifles went to the extreme end and top, on the chance of deer breaking out. The capercailzie were usually found sitting in trees near the summit, and when disturbed would throw themselves off their perches with a great stir, and instead of flying forward would launch themselves down the hillside and pass over the heads of the guns at a pace astonishing for so large a bird, and thus offering but snap shots; and, helped by the thick foliage and bad footing, everything was in their favour. In this way we saw an old cock draw the double fire of four good men and yet pass on untouched. Having gained an impetus

and secured the full use of their wings as the low side of the wood was neared, they would provokingly begin to circle upwards, and swinging back behind the beaters, would again mount to the heights they had been disturbed from. Those who have never tried it may think the missing of so large a bird must be very bad shooting, but when flying as described they will often beat the gun; and let no one engaging in the sport for the first time start out with the idea that this bird is a very easy victim; likewise, let him be very careful not to cover himself with disgrace by killing a hen instead of a cock, for it is a far more serious offence than when an "accident" happens to a hen pheasant or a grey hen.

Let us pass on to a more plentiful description of game, viz., the black grouse, as it is described in books, although across the Border it is ever called black-game. A tender, weakly bird when a poult, it easily succumbs to bad weather at that stage of its existence; and even when the twentieth of August arrives, they are still but poor fools and flutterers, and so they

remain till the corn is cut. For about the first three weeks from the twentieth, depending on the harvest, they afford but the poorest sport, often having to be almost trodden on before they fly, and no skill is required to kill them. It is undoubtedly the case that in many places these fine birds are getting scarcer each year, and this may arise from their great stupidity and the killing of them in the month of August. At that time, and before they have grown their tails, even the old cocks are nearly as silly and sit almost as close as the young broods, and it would be a good thing if their day of doom were put back till the first of September.

As the corn ripens every brood flocks to it, and on the generous diet they quickly fill out and attain maturity, and the young cocks turn nearly as black as the old ones. In the early part of the season they are to be found in cover composed of bog-myrtle, cranberries, bell-heather, juniper, bracken, rushes, long grass, and birch-trees ; but as harvest approaches they seek the turnip-fields near the edges of the

standing corn, and a very easy prey they then are. A change, however, quickly comes, and as soon as the crops are cut, lo and behold! these birds are changed from very stupid ones into the most wide-awake of all game; and now, without great care and trouble, it is no longer possible to get within range of the cocks. The hens always remain more or less confiding, and when the stock is poor they are always spared. Where it is very good, then a certain number of old hens ought to be killed, and the best way of doing this is to shoot them early in the season, when flushed with their broods; for at that time no one experienced in the matter can make any mistake between a young hen and an old one.

Blackcock stalking with either gun or pea-rifle is a very poor amusement; but the author thinks when driven they offer the very finest of sport. For many seasons we had the opportunity of seeing a large head of blackcock annually put into the bag on the Loch Nell and Kilmaronaig shootings near Oban, and then rented by our good friend Mr. James S. Virtue.

Situated between the Bridge-of-Awe and Connal Ferry, they extended over fifty thousand acres, of which some twelve thousand was wood; and as in those days there was no railway through the property, the whole shooting yielded some of the best all-round sport in Scotland. With the exception of red-deer and ptarmigan, every other species of game was in plenty, and flapper and snipe-shooting could be commenced on the first of August, and sport carried on every day till the first of February. The black-game were then a noted feature on this estate; but as we are writing of the seven years from 1870 to 1877, we cannot say how matters now stand in this respect; for, at the expiration of Mr. Virtue's lease, this shooting was split up into four or five smaller ones, and the increase in the number of tenants may not have tended to keep up the same fine stock of game. During Mr. Virtue's reign no blackcocks were killed till the woodcocks made their appearance in the covers, sometime early in November, and then day by day a fresh cover was beaten, and, oh! the

fun of finding oneself right in the path of a big pack of blackcocks about to break cover! From tree-top to tree-top they come fluttering along till, at about a hundred yards from the end of the cover, all perch and sit listening to the cries of the beaters. Shortly, three or four old cocks, the acknowledged leaders of the party, take wing and come dashing forwards; but now is not the time to open fire if a score is to be made—for, if that be done, the rest of the pack will assuredly turn back; so let the shooter keep concealed and allow the first few cocks to pass by unmolested, and as soon as the main bulk of the birds have had a lead given them by these few old stagers, they will all follow in small lots; and then, no matter how hot the fire may be, nothing will deter them from following each other. Now is the time to keep cool and make each barrel tell, for the chance that is passing so rapidly away may not again present itself for many a day to come. These packs were often very large, and all over this shooting there were plenty numbering from fifty to over a

hundred in each. At one stand we once had the luck to secure twenty-two old cocks out of a pack coming as described, and on another occasion nineteen; but these were the only two chances of that sort in seven years, or in some two hundred days of sport.

If the covers were wet—and as we are writing of Argyllshire, it is needless to say such was often the case—then the blackcocks would be found sitting out on the heather to escape from the dripping of the trees. In this case the beaters were sent round to drive in a large tract of moor and stubble, and the birds were thus forced back to the woods, when the usual sport began, resulting in a mixture of nine or ten sorts of game each day. Driven blackcock make very deceiving shooting for those who are unused to it. Flying silently and weighing between three and four pounds they convey no impression of their speed, and it looks impossible to miss the great black lump coming apparently steadily overhead; and so most of the uninitiated are tempted to shoot too much at them, and two gentlemen, both holding good names

at partridge drives in Norfolk, both came home the first day they joined in the sport vowing the black-cocks bore charmed lives and were armour-plated.

For this shooting we prefer No. 4 shot, but No. 5 in the first barrel and No. 4 in the other is also very good. On any shooting offering chances at many sorts of game, a cartridge-belt is most useful; those with metal clips are the best. The buckle will divide the "fours" from the "fives," and a pocket can hold some "sevens;" and thus prepared, cartridges can easily be kept unmixed and quickly changed as often as wished. Also, in a wet country, the belt worn under the coat and vest certainly keeps ammunition drier than any other way of carrying it ready for use. When first visiting Kilmaronaig in 1867, there were large flocks of blackgame close to the lodge, and it was within half a mile of it that the score of twenty-two was made.

Pheasants were, however, introduced into what we called the home covers, with the result that the long-tailed cocks drove those with the curly ones right off

that beat, and two years after the pheasants appeared it was rare to see a blackcock on it. It was on this beat the author once saw a cock-pheasant in rising break its neck against the bough of an oak; and some few minutes later from the same wood flew a covey of bewildered partridges, and coming at him so low that he dared not shoot, he jumped up and caught and held one of the covey with a high left-handed catch, and "Well fielded!" was cried from all the guns. Whilst on the subject of curious shots, we will also tell of two others—and in thirty years these four are the only out-of-the-way shooting events happening to us. When out one autumn day on the Ardconnell shootings at Oban, we spied with a field glass a pack of some hundred blackcocks sitting in a turnip-field, and sending off the keeper to go round and try and put them over us, we crept into position. The pack came well, and picking out the two leaders, we killed and gathered them, and walked slowly on to allow Donald to come up. A cry from him called a halt and, on coming within hail, to our great surprise,

we heard there were a "lot more down." A dog was loosed, and eventually seven others were garnered; but, even then, Donald maintained there were still some left. With the exception of the first two, we had seen no others drop, and to this day it puzzles us to know how that could have happened. However, there were the nine old cocks to the two barrels, and although the result of an accident, we accepted the matter without any great grief. The last of the oddities that happened took place in recent years, whilst shooting with the late Mr. Benjamin Way at Denham Place, Uxbridge. We were posted by the side of an osier bed bordered by a trout stream, across which the pheasants were coming, and the first shots we fired resulted in an odd right and left—a cock to the first barrel and a pike to the second.

Since those happy Kilmaronaig days, although plenty of blackgame have been killed in other counties, never again have we seen such a fine show of these splendid birds, and such successful driving, so continuously carried on.

For beauty of scenery and variety of sport, there is no part of the bonnie North better able to hold its own than the country lying between Oban, Ardrishaig and Dalmally. Were it not for the weather, it would be perfection; but, if once it begins to rain, there is no telling how long it may last. Once we saw it fine every day for a whole month; but, during a ten years' experience, it has several times rained every day for four or five weeks in succession; and, to make this the more provoking during these moist periods, the nights have been splendidly starlight and bright, and so regularly so, that speculation was rife as to whether this would be accounted for scientifically. Rain is fatal to all sport—blackgame and woodcock desert the covers; partridges remain crouched close together in shelter, which they only quit for the shorn stubbles as food is required; grouse sit on bare and burnt ground, and are totally unapproachable; the accumulating waters flood the marshes, and cause the wild fowl to swim so high in their haunts that the advancing gunner is

detected from afar; and even the rivers become so flooded as to be unfishable—and, in long mackintosh, the mournful sportsman is driven to the boat on the loch, only, even there, to find the trout rising in a washed-out fashion, and nothing can be more depressing than a month of this sort of weather. The shooter sadly makes a choice between a wetting without a mackintosh or a stewing in one. Probably he tries both plans, and even then cannot make up his mind which of the two processes is the less hateful. For his part, the author prefers a short, thin, roomy mackintosh, which will keep out rain from neck to hips; for any amount of wetting below these joints is quite immaterial when taking exercise, but chest, shoulders, and back should be kept dry.

It is often stated that those taking exercise in mackintosh coats will soon become rheumatic; that, however, is not our experience, for during the past thirty years we have always shot in one on wet days, and up to the present we are absolute strangers to that painful malady. If only heavy showers are

passing, the coat when not worn is best carried across a thin leather strap passed over the shoulder, and unless going through thick cover, this is better and quicker for pulling off and on than the rolling up plan, and if the strap be put in one of the pockets of the mackintosh as soon as it is done with for the day, it will always be ready and never get mislaid. As to articles that cannot be found when wanted, we would advise those who do not indulge in the questionable luxury of a valet, to have all such things as boot-trees, spats, cartridge-bags, gun-covers, etc., plainly marked with their initials.

The worry of a struggle with a sticking cartridge may usually be avoided if the chambers of the gun are well oiled at starting, and the dose repeated once or twice during the wet day, and for this purpose the keeper should always carry a small bottle of oil; but if none is in the field, fat or butter will do nearly as well. A really pulpy, frayed, and swollen cartridge is a melancholy object to look at and handle, and when once reduced to such a state is

best thrown away, as no efforts to dry it can restore it to its pristine smoothness.

To many sportsmen, the author amongst the number, the pursuit of the ptarmigan is of all others the most fascinating; it is the deer-stalking of the shot-gun, for it takes the shooter to the same rough heights and the same wild scenery the stalker delights in, and anyone who can walk a ptarmigan hill never need fear for his powers if offered a day with the deer. These hardy birds are seldom found in any quantity below an altitude of 2000 feet, and where the heather and the grouse cease to exist, there they thrive. Ptarmigan! As the word is penned, what pleasant memories are recalled of stony hills in Sutherland, Inverness, Ross, Perth, and Argyll—visions of rocky peaks, of dull grey stones patched with black and yellow crottle—some flat, and standing out at right angles to the hillside, look like the giant slates of giant school-boys; others, nearly round, seem barely able to keep their places, and appear as if a push would send them crashing to the valley; rocks of every shape and

size, stones by the myriad, from the tiny ones that run away in thousands from the tread, to the great lumps as big as small cottages, round which a careful way has to be picked. Rocks and stones on every side, some shining and sparkling in the sun, others looking black in shadow, and yet prevailing over all is a cold, dull, melancholy tint of grey. Deep below lies the sombre valley of dark heather, flecked with white streaks of running burns, and dotted here and there with lochs that look like little ponds. No visible sign of life, and apparently nothing growing that could support it; and yet, on these sterile altitudes ptarmigan exist and thrive and hatch their young. If the day be still and warm, and birds plentiful, it will not be long ere a sharp harsh "cr-r-aik" is heard, and again and yet again it sounds; but, if the shooter be a novice, look as hard as he may, nothing living will his eyes detect, and he will turn and ask Donald what is making that queer noise, and get for answer: "It's just ptarmigan, sir! I've been minding them some time.

Do ye no see them sitting right in front?" Then suddenly a stone appears to be alive, and lo! a ptarmigan is sitting not forty yards away; and then another and another gradually dawn on the uneducated eye, for as yet they have not changed their mottled and stone-coloured plumage for the whiter one which Nature provides for them to match the winter snow; but even in the depth of the Scotch winter the hen usually retains more of the grey plumage than the cock. The uninitiated may think it must be very tame sport to get within visible range of birds sitting on the ground, and that therefore they must be very easy to kill; but, close as they occasionally sit, and prepared as the shooter is, he will yet have to shoot well to get a brace, for of all game-birds ptarmigan are the quickest off their feet, for their bodies are light, their wings are long, and, accustomed to fly against the mountain gales, their flight is extremely fast. As the shooter arrives at the heights where the grouse end and the ptarmigan begin, both birds may at times be flushed together, and, though the

former is the heavier bird, it can then be seen the wings of both are as nearly as possible of the same length, which will average about twenty-five inches. At various times the author has cut open the crops of ptarmigan, and has always found the contents to consist of the small oblong evergreen leaves of the crowberry, mixed with a few whole leaves of the blaberry. Those killed early in the day have had their crops only partially filled, while those shot in the afternoon have been brimful, and this even when deep snow is on the hills ; for on steep faces there are always snow-slips—miniature avalanches, in fact—which leave their food exposed, and in such spots on well-stocked grounds it is not unusual to see fifty or sixty of these wild and beautiful birds all feeding together. It is of little or no use going after them on stormy days. The wind is the great enemy to success, and if high and cold, the birds will be unapproachable, and, rising out of shot, will take long flights often right across the valley, and so in a few minutes they will safely alight in some sheltered spot, to reach which would take the pursuer

A. Thorburn

fully two hours' hard walking. If these birds can be seen to settle, it should be borne in mind they always run forward some distance on alighting. On many of the high hills of the North they are not plentiful, and even if a large stock be left, they never increase in a proportionate degree, and the best bag we have helped to fill was made at Corrour on a bright, hot, still day on the 2nd of September, 1881, when the late Mr. Henry Spencer Lucy, his cousin, Mr. Charles Williams, and the author killed twenty-two brace and forty-six white hares. But far larger scores than this have been recorded, though we believe that forty-eight brace is the highest. It is needless to say they will mostly be found on the sheltered side of the hill, but their haunts are often so steep and stony that it is not safe to walk with the gun at full cock. In places of this sort and with a good stock of birds, it is almost wiser, if out with but one keeper, not to fire at those launching themselves into space, and where it is evident a kill must drop the bird several hundred feet ere it strike the ground. When gathered, it will

generally be smashed and not worth taking home; and with only one keeper out, a little restraint of this sort will save the loss of much time in waiting for him while he clambers down and toils up again. Should, however, the attacking party be in force, then there is always some one told off—usually a ponyman—to keep round the base of the hill being beaten, on purpose to gather birds thus falling.

Ptarmigan driving we have never seen tried but once, and that was on Mal Huich, at Glentromie, with the result of sixteen brace; but what we then saw leads us to think that there is nothing to hinder successful ptarmigan driving, providing their flights are carefully studied by the keepers.

Roedeer are common throughout Scotland wherever there are woods to shelter them, but as soon as the novelty of the first few shots has worn off, their pursuit, if driven to the guns in cover, soon ceases to be a sport in which much excitement is to be found, as they are very easily despatched, and little pleasure can be found in shooting animals so beautiful.

In August and September they are so poor as to be almost unfit for the table—their coats are yet thin and red; and it is not till November and the two following months that the livery of condition is donned, as shown by the blue-brown colour of the hide and the thick mat of hair covering it. Even when at their best, if the assistance of a good cook is lacking, they are most moderate eating; but an *artiste* being forthcoming, then a *filet* of roe *piqué* and *mariné* is by no means a dish to despise. They are easy victims to a charge of No. 4 shot placed behind the shoulder, and the best buck we ever secured fell to a few pellets of No. 6. It is a cruel thing to fire at these handsome little fellows if they are over thirty-five yards off, and this even though they be broadside on; but, sad to say, this is a matter often disregarded. In the opinion of the author the best form of sport to be had with roebuck is to be got by going out alone, and armed with a ·360 rifle; and then, by sneaking about in the woods, a shot can often be had, and as they are very

quick at hearing, seeing, and winding danger, anyone getting a few in this way may be fairly proud of success. If the cover where they are sought for be one having open spaces of bracken and heather in it, then an ascent to any higher ground should be made, and by the aid of the tell-tale spy-glass the pretty little quarry can often be found and become the object of a genuine stalk, which usually ends in the defeat of the stalker. In August and September roe will leave the covers and live out on the moor, and twice when stalking deer at Corrour the author has spied them fully three miles from any wood, but on each occasion our polite attentions were fairly baffled by their superior sharpness. In Gaick Forest we have also often seen the same thing, only with the difference of making an abominable miss at a nice little buck. In places where they are not shot they become very tame, and when fishing last spring with Mr. Charles Chetwode Baily on the Wester Elchies water of the Spey, they could daily be seen by the river-side, and allowed us to pass and even to stop

to look at them when standing within shot. If caught when young they are easily tamed and turned into pets; but the bucks, with their sharp little horns, are dangerous ones, as they are liable to be suddenly treacherous, and a stab is a serious matter. Writing of pet bucks recalls to mind the experience of a friend, who, happening to read an advertisement of some small South African deer—two does and a buck—for sale at Liverpool, purchased them to turn out in his park. He himself was away the December day of their arrival, but the head keeper let them loose, and hearing of the event, the lady of the house and her daughter started off to inspect the new comers. They were soon found, and having eaten bread thrown to them and behaved in quite a friendly way, the ladies turned to leave, when the buck instantly charged, first one and then the other, and rolled them both over on the grass, grievously scaring them, though luckily, owing to the then fashionable dress-improver, this cowardly attack from behind was rendered harmless, and scrambling to their feet they fled to the house.

The next morning further news came that an old woman crossing the park had met with like treatment; so out sallied their purchaser and would-be acclimatizer to see what it all meant. Nothing took place; the buck came to him to be patted, and acted like a perfect gentleman, so for the moment it was supposed the ladies had contrived to irritate him. The next day a labourer's wife was knocked over and two other women threatened, and it became apparent this depraved little wretch held the sight of petticoats in abhorrence, and always "went" for their wearers.

Determined to try and effect a cure, our friend donned some borrowed garments, and dressed as a woman; and, armed with a stout stick, he walked up to the buck and was at once charged. The attack was met right stoutly, and after two rounds victory rested with the flounces. It was hoped this would work a cure, but it only resulted in the monster quickly learning to distinguish a dressed-up man from the real article, and as the case seemed incurable,

the Liverpool dealer was persuaded to take them back, though not exactly at the price paid.

The following remarkable extract from the *Times* of 29th May, 1891, will show how highly the Germans prize roebuck shooting :—

"From our own Correspondent.

"Berlin, *May 28th.*

"The Emperor returned to Berlin this evening. His Majesty has had very good sport in East Prussia, having brought down a score of roebucks. But then, deer-stalking is a very different thing in Germany to what it is in Scotland."

The last remark is clearly penned by a cobbler who has *not* stuck to his last, for evidently red deer and roedeer are thought to be one and the same animal, and we cannot help thinking the writer had seen neither sport in either country. But be that as it may, the inhabitants of the Fatherland have a not very commendable way of shooting them in the rutting season by imitating the call of the doe. When

residing as a youngster at a private tutor's at Runkel on the Lahn, in Nassau, many a one the author has thus "potted." The Germans call it "Die blat zeit," or the bleating time. The chief difficulty to the beginner is the bleating, and though there are now wooden calls made which anyone can bring into play by merely blowing through them, in the days that we write of the only known way was to produce the bleat by means of a beech leaf, and to do this properly required long practice and plenty of it. Our old Jäger Wilhelm carried a pair of scissors to cut off the rough edges of the leaf, and then doubling a small piece of it over the tips of the two first fingers, he would apply it to his lips and produce the bleat steadily.

Many a day did we tramp to the forest in July and August, and some place having been silently found where a buck had recently been, as evidenced by the torn-up moss and barked stems of the undergrowth, the performance would begin. Selecting a spot near this, and as open as might be in front, but yet offering good concealment, and having the gun

at the ready and at full cock, the bleat would sound through the silence of the wood. Oftener than not nothing came. At times, however, a stick would be heard to crack, followed by a "bump, bump, bump," and the buck would come bounding and capering and showing himself off with the most fantastic springs, and then stop suddenly short to look for the charmer. That was the fatal moment for him, and a steady hand and a charge of No. 3 shot in an Ely wire cartridge could hardly fail to lay him low. Poor sport indeed, and an ignoble way of circumventing the quarry. Yet, withal, it had its charms—the novelty, the absolutely motionless attitude the shooter was kept in, the study of the wind before taking up position for the bleat—which, when commenced, had to be continued in one uniform tone; not a falsetto note to begin with and a diapason the next—all combined to make excitement. The shooter was almost bound to avail himself of the first standstill the buck made, for if he could not see the doe he would often frisk off end on. Also the bites of large

voracious and innumerable gnats had to be endured stoically, as the smallest movement made to dislodge them from face or hands meant certain detection.

The forests of Germany are most beautiful in the summer months. Lilies of the valley grow wild in profusion, and the air is rich with their perfume; wild strawberries are in plenty; the golden oriole is a common bird, and the timber is superb. Old Wilhelm was the reputed best bleater of the district, and certain it was he called up a greater number of bucks than any of the other keepers; but as during the whole of our stay in Nassau we never once heard a doe bleat, we are unable to say how closely he imitated Nature. We have never heard of this plan of shooting roebuck being tried in Scotland, but can see no reason why it should not be carried on with success by those going up to their shooting quarters early in the season. The novelty would make the first experiments exciting, and if pursued alone and the victim, if there was one, had to be carried home on the shoulders of his

destroyer, it would at any rate ensure a real good conditioning for "grouse day." A good buck will scale from fifty to sixty pounds as he falls, and we remember once staggering some eight miles with one of about this weight, and arriving home well beaten at the old Castle of Runkel on the Lahn. What with falling in love with a very charming fräulein, keeping a pack of dachs hounds for badger-hunting, and getting a shot at something almost every day in the season, it is to be feared the tutoring part of the business was somewhat neglected. It was on the River Lahn we first saw and shot a sea-pie or oyster-catcher. Not knowing in the least what the *rara avis* was, and no native having previously seen a similar one, it was sent off to the nearest bird-stuffer in the neighbouring town of Dietz; and proud were all when it was returned with a long German name, and a statement that it was a *very* rare bird only at times met with—*not* on the coasts of Scotland, but on the West Coast of Africa; and until a return to England was made, followed by a visit to the Clyde,

we were in happy ignorance that our prized bird was almost as common as a seagull.

It was also at Runkel that the author was fined for taking a hawk's nest! One spring day we had inadvertently strayed over the march of the large shooting we had permission to range over, and had climbed up a tree for a hawk's nest; on descending we found our only and much-valued gun in the hands of an old man, who, after roughly explaining he was the keeper of the shooting on to which we had strayed, peremptorily called on us to follow him.

Finding explanations of no avail, and as he commenced to move off with the precious weapon, we had no option but to follow, and while so doing, learnt that the town of Limburg and a magistrate—both quite seven miles distant—was the point the old jäger was making for. He had the gun and a stout stick as well, so there was no help for it, and we trudged after him in a rage. The forest path was narrow, and the old man of the woods went first with our gun over his shoulder, and we soon noticed

it was safely at half-cock, and that he had no firm grip on the butt, so with one dashing spring forward the barrels were seized, and possession of our treasure was regained, almost ere the would-be captor understood what had happened, and a hasty bolt at once disposed of any chance he had of recovering it. Convinced by a few futile efforts that it was hopeless to try and catch us, he turned and went his way with many strange oaths, but pursued by some pressing invitations in our very best German to follow us to Runkel. Three weeks went by and the matter was forgotten, when a smart gendarme appeared one fine morning, and handed in an invitation to come before the magistrate of Limburg to answer a charge of assault and poaching! Accompanied by our tutor, an appearance was duly made on the day fixed, and a fine of two hundred gulden—or twenty pounds—was the unsatisfactory result of a brief interview with the local beak. Fifty gulden were for the poaching and the rest for the assault; and then, worst of all, we were made to understand the half

of each fine would go to the cunning old prosecutor. Having given notice of appeal, we returned home somewhat crestfallen, and at the end of another month the same well-turned-out soldier again presented us with a polite missive requesting payment of the little account. He was handsomely treated in the matter of *schnaps*, and was the bearer on our behalf of an equally polite letter saying remittances had not arrived from England; but as we had not ventured to make the matter known to our home office, this was not to be wondered at. To our young and unfledged ideas a fine of twenty pounds for taking a hawk's nest was a cruel and tyrannical wrong, and our great object was to gain time, for well we knew our stay at Runkel would be over in another ten days; and before further applications were received, *perfide* Albion had once more welcomed us to her shores, and to this day, rightly or wrongly, it rejoices our heart that the Limburg magistrate and that rascally old jäger have never received any of that monstrously unfair penalty.

CHAPTER IV.

SNIPE AND WILDFOWL.

Most sportsmen, if offered the choice between an opportunity of killing a hundred pheasants in a day or twenty couple of snipe, would unhesitatingly declare for the time on the marsh; and many maintain there is a charm in the pursuit of this twisting, fast-flying little bird that places it in front of every other sport to be had with game rising to the gun. In the opinion of the author, it does not make much difference whether snipe be approached up or down wind; the latter is the orthodox method, as they hang in the wind for a second before making off, and so offer easier shots. Yet if there be much water about or thin ice, the breeze will carry the noise of splashing and crackling feet a long distance, and thus cause

them to rise wild, and often quite out of range. Should it be raining or snowing or blowing very hard, then the down-wind plan is certainly the better, as it keeps the eyes clear from all drifting particles. Snipe should be killed with No. 7 or No. 8 shot —the latter for choice; and to a good marksman at other game, an easy road to success is to wait if they rise near, and to almost "snap" if they do this far out.

Should a bird that has risen singly fall to the first barrel, then before reloading it is best to remain for a few seconds ready to use the other one; for often the rise of the "singleton" is but the signal for a companion to do likewise, and if reloading be commenced immediately after emptying one barrel, more often than not this rise will take place before the fresh cartridge is in position, and the bird will get off scot-free. We have seen drawings both of snipe and woodcock in which they are depicted as flying with the bill held straight out in front of the eyes; and even Ansdell himself, in his picture of "Cocker and

Woodcock," falls into this very error. Both these birds, however, invariably fly with their bills pointed to the earth, at about an angle of forty-five degrees. The author has also read, in a newspaper devoted entirely to sport, some hints on how "to seek the *silent* snipe;" but, so far as his experience goes, not one in ten flies off without uttering its wild, sharp cry of "scape, scape."

In working very soft and boggy places, slow walking should be the order of the day, for it is impossible to shoot well if the feet be not firmly set; and, should it be doubtful if the ground will carry the shooter, then the dogs should be sent to hunt and splash about in places deemed treacherous. As a rule, a quaking bog is safe walking; and also, wherever the common green rush grows the going may be trusted.

The best days for snipe shooting are often those offering but little inducement to leave the library or the billiard-room. Raw east-wind days, with soft snow or drizzle falling, are usually extra good ones,

and especially if they come just before a hard frost, or follow a rapid thaw.

Old fishing stockings, not quite waterproof enough for the river, will yet make good wear for marsh work, provided there be neither brambles nor furze-bushes to encounter, and these two prickly shrubs are often enough in plenty on marsh land where it is interspersed with hillocks. The leaky old stockings will still keep one fairly dry and warm, and they are not so heavy as long boots, are more quickly dried, and take less space in a portmanteau.

Snipe may be encouraged to come to certain marshes, and even induced to remain there longer than usual by placing heaps of manure in puddles and wet places, so that all round the edges of the heap there is wet, soft ground for "billing." This is not an entire waste of manure if it be done on marshes grazed in summer; and we once saw quite a snipe preserve formed in this way, and for several weeks each heap held snipe round the edges of it, doubtlessly tempted to remain there by the good feeding; for it is believed

the animalculæ they subsist on are bred in the manure and pass by filtration to the wet ground surrounding.

When seeking for snipe in long straight ditches, it is best to walk somewhat in the shape of the letter **S**, and only to approach the actual side of the ditch every fifty yards or thereabouts; for if the shooter walks along the whole length of the ditch he can clearly be seen approaching from a long distance, and thus all wide-awake birds will rise out of shot. In a few places snipe are driven to the guns, and then, although they do not fly as fast or as "twiddling" as when first flushed, they offer very pretty high shots, and any one who has been grouse driving will probably have recollections of a few shots of this sort.

Under the wing of every snipe will be found several long feathers with black and white bars, which are useful for the wings of salmon flies. They can be used as they are or dyed, and make a nice addition to the long mixed wing tied on the large hooks so much used on many spring rivers.

The best snipe bags we have seen have been made on the shootings of Kilmaronaig by Oban; the Laggans by Campbelton (a hundred and fifty couple to one gun by the tenth of December), Carim by Blackford, Raehills by Moffat, Glentromie by Kingussie, Carnanton in Cornwall, Langley Park near Norwich, and Netherfield Park in Hertfordshire, and on this last-named estate, though not twenty miles from London, we once killed twenty-three snipe for twenty-seven cartridges. On all these places there are at certain times great quantities to be met with, but they are ever birds of passage, passing to and fro with the changes of the weather, and in accordance with the migration from north to south, or *vice versâ*. Thus, when found in quantities they should be gone at with a will, and it is of little use inviting a friend to come and help "next week," for the chances are the bulk of the flight will by then have passed on.

The same ground that holds snipe will usually be visited by ducks of all kinds, and these should

invariably be looked for up-wind, as their sense of smell is very keen. When ducks of any sort are flushed, it is often difficult to remember to hold the gun well over them, for at first they rise nearly straight up in order to gain an altitude for their flight to another and quieter spot. Duck and widgeon rarely return and settle near the spot where they have been disturbed, but teal seldom make long flights, and will generally alight in the marsh they have been moved from; and, if the shooter keep still and hidden, they will even at times return and pitch in the very place they started from, and plenty of shots should be got before they are driven quite away.

The marsh attached to Mr. E. Brydges Willyams' shootings of Carnanton is as fine a piece of wildfowl ground as could be desired, and anyone having the good luck to get a day on it will be nearly sure to use the best part of a hundred cartridges; and the last winter time the author tramped it, and it was a very bad day for snipe owing to quantities of "cat ice" and the clatter it made in breaking, his bag was,

five wild ducks, twenty-four teal, and sixteen snipe; and had these latter not been made so wild by the noise of the breaking ice, the number could easily have been trebled.

This marsh has quite an historical interest, and during the last two thousand years almost every foot of the large acreage has been dug up for "tin streaming" purposes. The Phœnicians, the ancient Britons, and the Romans worked on it, and to this day the industry is still carried on, and the incessant digging has rendered some parts treacherous walking, and the most practised bogtrotter could hardly walk it for the first few times without a guide. Every dangerous hole in it is, however, well known to the two keepers, and when placing himself in the hands of old Tullum or his son, the visitor can "go forth" fearlessly. The former is a man of extraordinary broad build and of herculean strength, and in his younger days was a most redoubtable wrestler.

Our home bags of snipe are, however, quite put into the shade by some of the foreign ones; and in

A DEATH TRAP.

FROZEN OUT

the early parts of this year, 1891, my friend, Mr. Frank Lawson wrote me from Cairo, as follows :—

"We (Captain Stewart, Gordon Highlanders, and myself) killed and picked up 1,170 snipe in twelve days' shooting. We had one extraordinary good day of 217 birds, of which I personally accounted for 134. The next best days were two of 114, and in the three best consecutive days we got 431 snipe."

Permission was once given us to shoot wildfowl on the water—it could almost be called lake—separating the Island of Easdale from the mainland, and lying some ten miles below Oban. The north end of the island is so close to the Argyleshire shore that they are not thirty yards apart, and are brought into communication by a single span bridge. Below this the two shores, each receding from the other, formed a splendid bay, the edges of which on the Easdale side were fringed with reeds, and a favourite haunt of widgeon when the autumn migration began. Just across the bridge was a small inn, but the one room it possessed was so stuffy, and the little bunk

let into the wall was so short, so hard, and so full of visitors; the sheets were so damp, and when thrown overboard the blankets were so scratchy; the chops were so tough, and the ham and eggs so dirty, that it was voted preferable to make early starts from Oban and drive there and back.

On the present occasion, one day in the last week of November, fully twenty years ago, having heard a great flight of widgeon had come in, I had driven down accompanied only by a boatman. We were early afloat and spent the day in beating up and down the reedy shores, and then, having thoroughly disturbed the birds and secured a few, the boat was forced into a bed of the tallest reeds, and keeping concealed some more were bagged as they returned to their favourite haunts. Thus we remained till it was no longer possible to see, so poling our way out of the mud, we began to row back to the inn. Having done about half the journey, a breeze sprang up, and the parting clouds disclosed a nearly full moon coming over the tops of the Ardmaddy hills,

and offering a fine chance of a little flight-shooting. Now, it had been noticed during the day that almost all the widgeon disturbed from the reeds had passed close to a rock about a quarter of a mile from the Easdale shore, and for this the boat was headed, and jumping on to it, I found it smooth and flat, well above high-water mark, and about as large as a dining-table for eight; so the boat was sent off to return to the reeds and keep the birds moving, but before parting, it was settled I was to be called for at the sound of my whistle. A brilliant moon soon shone out, and the birds came just as anticipated, and there was plenty of shooting. My retriever having lamed himself badly a few days previously, I was unable to gather the birds as they fell, and trusted to pick up some with the boat and secure others by sending out a man at daylight. It was freezing very hard, and no great regret was felt when, after the lapse of some three hours, fresh clouds came up and put an end to the sport; the whistle sounded shrilly across the waters, and shortly could be heard

our trusty man working the oars towards the rock. The boat was painted grey, and when about a hundred yards off she could just be discerned, but though the oars were working with heavy thuds against the rowlocks, she did not seem to come any nearer; then there was a good deal of splashing, and John could be heard muttering, and suddenly his voice rang out, "I'm fast aground, sir!" "Shove off, then, and try from the other side," was the reply. This was done with the like result. Numerous attempts to reach the rock were tried from other directions, but all were equally failures, and it began to dawn on me the tide had gone down and till it rose again I was a prisoner! This was soon ascertained to be the fact, the light of sundry matches showing the water had fallen considerably since the landing was made. A pretty state of affairs this, and rather than wait in the frost till the tide rose again, I determined to leave gun and cartridges on the rock and wade or swim to the boat, but no sooner was the intention cried to John than it had to be abandoned, for he shouted back, "For good-

ness sake, stay where you are, sir; the bottom is just nothing but mud, and the oar sinks in up to the top!"

Therefore, there was clearly nothing for it but to grin and endure; flask and pipe were with me, and John stood by with the boat, and we conversed now and then. The frost grew keener and the night darker, till at last the boat was invisible, and it was no longer possible to distinguish the edge of the black little rock from the surrounding water; it became unsafe to stamp up and down, and the wretched prisoner was reduced to squatting and keeping himself warm as best he could; and not till two o'clock in the morning, and after an imprisonment of some eight hours, was the boat able to get near enough to take me off that odious rock, and never again am I likely to be so trapped.

The driver of "the machine" and the people at the inn were greatly alarmed at our absence, but had kept up a good peat fire, and some poached eggs—dirt and all—with hot toddy, soon produced a thaw; and then driving home, we were none the worse the next day

for the dark and cold experience, the recollection of which was somewhat softened by the boatman at the inn sending up seventeen widgeon which he had picked up dead the next morning. The moral of this little adventure is to warn others who may go in search of wild fowl not to land on rocks in tidal waters, unless certain of being able to get off again at their own sweet will.

In wildfowl shooting we have experimented with guns of various calibres, from a single-barrel four-bore down to the ordinary twelve. The above-mentioned single gun weighed fourteen pounds, and the labour of carrying it was so great that, except for boat work, it was quickly discarded for a double-eight; this weapon just turned the scale at twelve pounds, and had all the disadvantages of the single-barrelled four-bore, so again descending in the scale, we come to a double-ten; but between this and the full choke double-twelve we found so little difference, that eventually we have remained content to use one of these, with four drams of black powder or fifty-four grains of Schultz and one

and a quarter ounce of A.A.A. shot; of these there are thirty-two to the ounce, which gives forty pellets to the charge; and with full-choke barrels this, we think, is the best sort of shot to use at any fowl larger than duck, and they are effective up to seventy yards and even further, but beyond the first-named distance they begin to fall very much. We have tried various devices for keeping a charge of large shot together up to long ranges when fired from a twelve-bore gun, and we are quite sure, if it be a *cylinder*, that nothing can beat an Ely wire cartridge. If, however, it be a full choke weapon, then we have found a cone of the thinnest tissue paper help to the same end. Make it nearly the size of the shell, gum up the end, drop the shot in, invert the cartridge case and push the filled cone gently home, so that the fastened-up end is outwards; put on the usual shot wad and turn down, not too tightly. This plan, however, gives very uncertain results, and we beg to propound a problem for the gunmakers to solve, and that is, how to make a twelve-bore shoot

A.A.A. shot so that they do not spread excessively at eighty yards. In some marshes we have often got a few snipe, and then had to try for wild geese, and we should indeed like to have a twelve-bore to do justice to both. S.S.G., of which sixteen go to the ounce, and the two sizes of shot above that, the largest only going five to the ounce, will of course kill at longer ranges, and the last-mentioned would do so at fully two hundred yards, but unless firing into the midst of a *very* large flock of birds, the chances are infinitesimal that any of these little bullets will ever reach its billet.

CHAPTER V.

LOW GROUND SHOOTING.—PARTRIDGES.—PHEASANTS.—HARES, ETC.

THE sport to be had with these descriptions of game has already been so well and so voluminously written about, and the habits, rearing, and preserving of partridges and pheasants have been so closely entered into, that it only remains for us to approach this part of our amusement in a superficial way. There yet remain a few parts of England where partridges are shot to dogs, and in Cornwall and Devon the sport is still carried on in the old style, and the code holding good for the grouse-shooter over dogs applies equally to this sport. The author, however, is of opinion that, if the owner of any shooting is really keen at seeing dogs work, and will be satisfied with a small bag, that then there is no county in England in which a

certain number of birds cannot yet be killed over them during the first ten days of the season.

Though now-a-days the stubbles are bare, and the shooter to dogs is thus robbed of fully half of his old cover, there still remain turnips, rape, clover, etc.; and as when once birds are driven into such cover they sit close and offer easy shots to a party walking in line, it is certain they would do the same to thoroughly broken dogs working without being whistled or shouted to.

The sport over the dogs can, however, be shared but by two guns, who would make nothing like the same bag as five or six others walking in line; but, to state that merely because stubbles are shorn, that therefore dogs are useless now-a-days, has always seemed to us a weak argument.

Four guns walking in line will cover about twice as much country, and kill nearly treble the quantity of game, that can be accounted for by two sportsmen shooting to dogs; and, we rather think, the pointers and the setters have been sacrificed in some degree

to the wish to make large bags, and of being able to invite more friends to join in the sport.

Walking in line is capital fun when properly carried out, and if the shooters are at a pleasant distance apart, say not nearer to each other than forty yards. The number of friends asked should be strictly determined by the character of the beat, and it will make poor sport, if four are bidden to walk a country of small fields and holding no great quantity of birds; albeit, the same ground would give a pleasant day to two, or at the most three. In counties where the fields are large, and vary in extent from thirty to even a hundred acres, as in Suffolk, Norfolk, and Lincolnshire, then, even six or eight guns can be walked in line with pleasure to them all; but, in our humble opinion, a party of four is the pleasantest to be out with; add to this four beaters and two keepers, each with a good retriever, and there are but few fields that cannot be taken in twice or thrice; but even if some of them are so large that it takes half-a-dozen turns to cover them properly, this sized party is easier to

work and keep in line than any larger one. For our own part, we prefer to walk turnips or other cover right out from end to end, and then to shift the guns at right angles to the beat, till the field is finished; by this means "the wheel" is done away with, a performance which is seldom well executed by a party of ten. It is quite extraordinary the number of shooters one meets who seem apparently wholly unable to keep in line. Those who are for ever in advance of the line are great sinners against the rest of the party, and they should be told off to walk on one of the flanks, as in that position they will do less harm than if in the middle of the line, which they at once make convex or wedge-shaped, and that formation forces plenty of game to break to right or left, and so to escape quite out of the direction of the beat.

In many parts of Scotland partridges are shot to dogs, for there the root-crops rarely fail, and at times are even too strong; in addition, there is such a quantity of other cover in the shape of whin, bracken, etc., that birds will lie to dogs right up to the end of

December. Owing to the lateness of the harvest across the border, partridge-shooting is rarely in full swing until the middle of September, and more often than not it is a fortnight later before the birds can be gone at systematically; indeed, on the Carim shootings by Blackford, in the autumn of 1877, we well remember watching corn being cut on the first of November.

Great numbers of partridges in the North nest on the heather, and there remain till harvest-time; and even then, though they will come to the corn and turnips for food during the day, they return to the heather to "jug;" and for a true and realistic idea of such sort of ground one look at Millais' beautiful painting, "The Fringe of the Moor," will tell my readers of what is in my mind better than anything that can be penned. Birds thus bred are of a much finer flavour than purely lowland ones, and gourmets have been heard to maintain that a young heather-bred partridge is the best of all winged game for the table.

As a specimen of a good Scotch bag, I may state that in this past season of 1891, on the shootings of Pitfour in Aberdeenshire, now leased from Colonel Ferguson by Mr. Frank Lawson, he and three other friends, of which I had the good luck to be one, commencing on the first of October, bagged in the open in ten short days and walking in line—7 grouse, 77 pheasants, 685 partridges, 203 brown hares, 615 rabbits, 6 snipe, 8 ducks, 17 various—total, 1,618 head.

A spaniel is preferable to a retriever for recovering any "little brown birds" that may be winged, as in high turnips or other thick cover the former will of necessity have his nose closer to the scent and below the turnip tops; and we have seen several well-broken spaniels that would fairly beat any retriever at this, the most difficult of all retrieving. Owing, however, to their headstrong and excitable natures, spaniels are very hard to procure perfectly trained.

It is often hotly debated as to whether a driven grouse is easier to kill than a driven partridge; but

for our part we have ever found the stubble bird far the easier to stop, for the very good reason that they do not fly as fast as grouse do, as rising nearer to the guns they have not time to get up full speed ahead; and, furthermore, as they approach the shooter they much oftener show up against the sky; and any mark viewed in such a light is always an easier one than if it be flying low, and against a background of the same colour as itself.

In partridge-driving, as in grouse-driving, numbers of shots are missed from the shooter allowing them to get too close on him; and if anyone will fire a few shots at a plate at fifteen or twenty yards, he will be surprised to see what a very small space the shot will cover, and how slight a margin is left for him to "come and go on."

As to "Frenchmen," they are not to be named in the same day as presenting either the variety of shots or as flying nearly as fast as grouse or English birds. They come to the guns low and slow, often singly or in twos and threes, and offer the easiest

of all driven shots; and many a laugh has been had by those watching someone proudly knock over five or six in succession, only to have the conceit utterly taken out of him by several coveys of English birds coming nearly twice as fast as the Frenchmen had done. There is no greater test of a good shot than a few slow birds followed by some very fast ones, and if all alike are cleanly stopped, the shooter may at once be put down as "useful." A moderate shot, finding himself in much better company, will often have his shooting improved; for the knowledge that his friends are better than himself will serve to make him rise to the occasion, and he will also be certain that all birds that are his will be strictly left for him to deal with. When driving partridges at the end of the season, the author on several occa sions has been asked to try and shoot cocks only. At the first moment it seemed an impossibility, but we soon found, if all thought of making a "double" was discarded, that then the matter was by no means a difficult one to accomplish, as with a good light

the horse-shoe of the cock shows out very clearly; and we know several friends who, if asked to do this, will kill a cock bird out of a covey almost every time, though of course now and again they will be deceived by an old hen, who will have almost as good a horse-shoe as a young cock. Five or six guns working in this style for the last few days of the season will be doing no slight service to that shooting ground, for cock birds are always too numerous, and the old ones assert their territorial claims tyrannically and fearlessly, and drive other and younger cocks far and wide, and do all they can to hinder them nesting anywhere near.

In the home counties there are often seasons when birds are plentiful and absolutely no cover to shoot them in; in such circumstances it is a good plan to walk over the manor just before harvest commences, and having found a corn-field or two that are failures, and the crop of which would not pay the expenses of cutting and carrying, enter at once into negotiation with the farmer and try and buy it as it stands; and

this accomplished, so leave it till the end of September. It will not be money thrown away, as cover will be provided to drive birds into, and we have often seen two fields of this sort add fully a hundred and fifty brace to the bag during the first three weeks of September; and as soon as the cream of the bird-shooting is over, the keepers can cut what remains of the crop, which can then be used for pheasant food; and, moreover, should such fields be near well-stocked covers, they will greatly help in keeping the longtails at home.

In placing guns for a partridge drive, it helps the bag if the shooters are all well known to their host, for if he be an observant and keen sportsman, he will have a very good idea of what each can do best; one will excel at high overhead birds, the strong point of another will be side shots, and another will be expert at low birds flying straight in his face. Now, if the host has a long and not wasted experience of his shooting, he will know where to place his friends so that each may get the sort of shots he is cleverest at. Wherever we go, we like to see the host placing his

guns for himself, and not leaving it to the keepers; for it is usually a guarantee he takes a deep interest in the matter and knows his ground thoroughly. Owing, however, to the constant change in the cropping of the fields, the shooting-ground is always different every season, and requires a fresh study each year.

As to shooting lunches, we have seen too much provided, and also too little, and there is always a happy medium which many of our friends have attained to perfection. Champagne, with hot and substantial solids, capped with *foie gras*, cake, old cognac, and big cigars, is not calculated to improve anyone's shooting; but all the same, it is preferable to cold tea and dry biscuits, which fare we once saw five guns asked to sit down to, at a white hare drive, at an altitude of two thousand feet above sea level!

We consider champagne is fatal to good marksmanship or stout walking, and have several times felt (only just to see if it really was the case) how it spoils the eye, and have witnessed the same effect on many others. We especially remember the occasion of a

ptarmigan day early in September on a hill-top which was absolutely springless, and so two bottles of champagne were put into the panniers, with beer for the men, to save the toil and waste of time in descending and remounting the steep hill to find a spring at luncheon time. Now, two bottles between three was not a very extravagant allowance after five hours' hard walking in a hot sun, for we had made an early start; they were fairly divided, and yet on one of the party his share had the effect of causing him, an old deer-stalker, to mistake mutton for venison on a sky line not a quarter of a mile distant, and for about half an hour after lunch we all three shot very badly; so "ware" champagne in the field, is our advice.

The best lunch cart we ever saw was invented by our friend Mr. Edward Lawson of Hall Barn; it started in life as an Irish car, and has been developed into something much better: it holds lunch and all needfuls, has an ice well, and two seats and two benches which take to pieces and pack into the car. When in use the usual seats are the buffets, the boards

on either side on which the feet should rest are tables, and the benches enable the shooters to sit at them and eat in great comfort.

Partridges shot under a kite do not give anything like the same sport offered by grouse; but the imitation hawk is worked as much as possible in a similar manner, allowance being made for the very different nature of the ground to be kited. When well done, the birds usually seek refuge in hedgerows, and rising in great fear close to the shooter, offer the easiest of shots; and unless birds be wanted for the larder and a drive cannot be arranged, it is not a sport to be commended, although one or two days in a season do no harm, and are all very well if just two friends want some birds, and can get at them in no other way.

Come we now to the pheasant, and in emulation of that wonderful scribe so mockingly and so pleasantly told of by the late Mr. Bromley Davenport, let us "seek the rocketer in his lair;" and were it not for his unimpeachable authority, it would be well-nigh impossible to believe such nonsense could ever

have been penned or printed. Editors of provincial newspapers are, however, often of a confiding turn of mind, and we remember a good laugh our party had years ago, at the expense of a local journal in Scotland. One of us had shot an eagle, but none of us had ever before handled one, and we were all uncertain whether it was a golden-eagle or an erne; three were in favour of the victim being the true king of birds, and but one was downright certain it was a sea-eagle, and to that opinion he adhered with considerable warmth; he was also an irrepressible joker, so to establish his theory, and confound the rest of us, he wrote an account of the exploit to the local newspaper, which wound up with a flourish, stating that "Gould, Morris, and Yarrell having been consulted, the bird was undoubtedly a splendid specimen of the *aquila sedum sidum*," and to his great joy this appeared in big type. Our friend was, however, right in his contention, for after all it did turn out to be a sea-eagle or erne. We have at times thought the writer of

"seeking the rocketer in his lair" may perhaps have been a scribe as irreverent as our merry friend of years gone by, and penned the article by way of a joke. A rocketer, to our mind, is a bird flushed some way off, and out of sight of the gun, and which, topping tall trees, comes to the shooter down-wind very high up in the air, and very fast. This, at any rate is, we think, the most difficult shot a pheasant can offer, and much more so than when the bird is seen to rise from the edge of the cover, and then attain an altitude as it flies to the gun, for the former mark will be going at a much greater pace than the latter one. Also, our ideal rocketer will frequently come with outstretched wings, which do not beat the air, and when moving in this way we have never met anyone who could make a good score, and often a bird of this kind will take the fire of several guns, and pass on untouched; and we believe the only way to make even fairly good shooting at birds thus flying, is to take a snap-shot. The great object of all pheasant preservers is to make

the shooting of them as difficult as possible, and to send them to their friends flying high and fast. Where there are hanging covers, there should be no difficulty in doing this, and if wooded hill-sides are both steep and high, it becomes a hard matter to beat them in such a way as to keep the birds within shot.

At Balls Park in Hertfordshire, Carnanton in Cornwall, Kilmaronaig in Argyle, Langley Park in Norfolk, Hall Barn in Bucks, and Tillingbourne in Surrey, we have repeatedly seen quantities of pheasants pass over the guns out of shot. It is, however, quite possible to send one's friends a stream of rocketers from absolutely flat covers. Masters, the head-keeper at Charlecote Park, Warwick ; Hammond, at Langley Park, Norwich ; Mathews, at Balls Park, Hertford ; and Norman, at Cowdray Park, Sussex, are all past masters at this and every other detail of the keeper's business ; and though doubtlessly there are many men quite as good, it would be a hard matter to find four better ones. At Langley Park some of the covers

had no hedges, and were merely fenced off with a shallow ditch dividing them from the adjoining fields, and in such covers the undergrowth was cut back for about a hundred yards, and the guns being placed a similar distance away from the fence, the pheasants could see and hear them, and so naturally ceased to run forward when the undergrowth failed; and then, as the beaters approached, they would at once fly up through the tall trees and pass over the shooters; and that they did come both high and fast may be guessed when at one stand, out of some four hundred birds put over six guns, but one hundred and twenty were laid low. This cutting back of the undergrowth is an excellent plan for giving rocketers, and it also provides plenty of shooting for a couple of guns standing back behind the beaters.

We have read it is advisable to kill cocks only the first time of going through well-stocked preserves; but having seen it tried, unless the manor is a large one with plenty of other covers on it, we are dead against the proceeding. Wherever it is done there

should be an interval of fully a fortnight to allow the birds to come together again before the same cover is beaten afresh. On small shootings where there are but few other covers for the hens to escape to, it is a suicidal policy, although one much appreciated by owners of adjoining spinnies should they not be preservers. Guests invited to a *battue* should never be told the number of birds turned down or reared on the beat they are to shoot. Hosts have been heard to say at breakfast, "Well, seven hundred birds have been reared in the woods we are going to beat to-day, so at any rate we shall have something to shoot at."

Forthwith guests will set to work with a rule of three sum. The birds turned down, plus the wild ones, will make at least a thousand in the cover, and, therefore, fully six hundred should be got; and all start on the day thinking they know what the total of the bag is going to be, a fact which of course spoils all the pleasure of anticipation; while, should but four hundred birds be picked up, all will return

home absolutely disappointed with a splendid day's sport.

If making an attack on thickly-stocked covers when perhaps some hundreds of cartridges may be wanted, it is wise to have the reserve ammunition under lock and key. By so doing, one will be sure of getting one's own cartridges when it is needful to replenish the bags, and in these days of Schultz and E.C., when so much depends on the loading, this is a matter of no slight importance. There can be no harm in always taking out plenty of cartridges; but even if the reserve be not touched and there be no lock, it will often be found short of the full complement at the end of the day; for, apart from the friends who may help themselves, there is a great deal of cartridge pilfering carried on, and we know of one instance in the vicinity of a village, the inhabitants of which turned out in numbers to watch the shooting, where the boy in charge of the game-cart and eight unlocked magazines was fairly caught selling ammunition by auction

on the road-side. It is certain that since taking care to have locks (the "Yale" padlock is perhaps the best) on our bags and magazines our cartridge bill has decreased, although the amount of shooting has remained the same.

If several guns are told off to come down a ride, each keeping equidistant and in front of the other as the beat advances, and if more guns have been posted ahead, then it is not good form for those who have been walking to leave the cover as they come to the end of it, and place themselves between those who have been posted outside. Those who have been moving will have had shooting the whole way along the ride, while the stationary ones will hardly get any sport till the beaters are nearing them, and will perhaps have been standing idle in the cold for some time; therefore, it is not right for those who have already had their share of the sport to come forward and take a double allowance. Those who have been shooting their way to their posted friends should either stand still, one behind the other, and wait for chances flying

back, or, should they be meant to come forward, the beaters should be halted while they gain the open, where they ought to be placed well in the rear of those who have been waiting.

During the rearing season, young pheasants have many enemies in winged and ground vermin, and even "the harmless necessary cat" is often a great culprit; but that ducks should be classed in the black list and done to death on that account will perhaps be read with surprise. Nevertheless, at Kilmaronaig during one breeding season not a day passed but what one or two young pheasants vanished, and for many days the keeper could not discover the thief; until one evening, while lying up on the watch, he saw an old drake from the farmyard waddle towards a lot of young birds, and, after looking them carefully over, he quickly snapped one up and swallowed it whole. The rascal was shot on the spot and brought to the house, where his crop was cut open, and therein were entombed not one but two young pheasants, and this was at a time of year when they were nearly as big as tennis balls.

Keepers vary very much in their ability to rear pheasants. Some will lose very few each season, and others will lose many hundreds, and it is not uncommon to hear of gentlemen who buy five thousand eggs and yet get no better result than others who have purchased but two thousand.

In order to give a keeper every chance, all bought eggs should be delivered before the end of the first week of May, and the slightly higher price paid for these is money well spent if the yield they give is compared with that of the later laid eggs.

To the mind of the not very enthusiastic shooter a *battue* is to some extent associated with the "tip" to be disbursed at the end of the day; and, as dusk comes on, the heads of guests are to be seen close together in whispered conversation, the tenor of which is: "How much shall you give? I vote we all do the same." This is a question we rarely ask of anyone, for as the day finishes and the total of the bag is called out, we settle in our own mind what is the right thing to do, and from that we rarely swerve. Where there

is not a very large staff of keepers, we usually remember the second in command as well as "the head." A friend of ours who is a good judge, and annually does a great lot of pheasant-shooting in the home counties, tells us he has a fixed tariff—ten shillings up to two hundred birds; a sovereign from that up to seven hundred; and from that up to a thousand, or even double, the maximum of two sovereigns is reached; and he finished up by saying: "And, thank goodness, as I'm a poor man, there are more days under seven hundred than over!"

This tariff is, however, one evolved by a Londoner, shooting chiefly within a radius of fifty miles of Pall Mall; beyond this distance, and in counties situate further away from clubland, tips are rightly not so large; for, in a society not depending on London gunners, and where the greater number of guns at every shooting party are made up of county gentlemen who shoot with each other many times every season, it would be unreasonable on the part of the keepers to expect large and oft-repeated tips

from the same hands, and moreover, they do not do so.

In fixing on the amount of a tip, we always take into consideration the number of guns out, and should be more liberal to a keeper on a shooting where five gentlemen had bagged a thousand head, than if a like total had been realized by ten. Also, we think the keepers on small shootings, where the staff is not strong, and the difficulties of preserving great, and all for but two or three days cover-shooting in the whole season, should receive more liberally than the keeper who has seven others under him, and twenty to thirty days at the longtails each season.

We have heard of a tip being given *before* the shooting began, so as to ensure a good place all the day; but sincerely glad are we to say we have never known of such a disgraceful thing being done. The few words said on the subject must not induce our readers to think we object to or would curtail tips to keepers, for that is not at all the case; we do not even regard them as a necessary evil, and have

ever "parted" with pleasure, and as a well-deserved acknowledgment of many days and many nights of hard work. The only tips we ever do grudge are those bestowed on idiotic footmen, who put out some other fellow's black trousers for us to dress with, and send us off from a country house with the kit of a stranger packed into our portmanteaus.

I cannot refrain from relating a piece of unexpected luck which happened to me one day when shooting with Mr. George Faudel Phillips at Balls Park, Hertford. We had had a first-rate day up to lunch-time, so much so, that I had got rid of all my cartridges, something just over three hundred. On resuming work, I found my reserve-bags had missed the ammunition cart, and that I was quite cleared out. Sir George Prescott kindly came to the rescue, and lent me a hundred to go on with ; at this moment, my host, who is a very old friend, came up and whispered me that he feared one or two of his guests had not had quite their share of sport, and asked if I would mind taking a stand in the ensuing beat which at

the best would yield but a few shots. Cheerfully consenting, he placed me himself in a spot to which we both knew pheasants never flew, and quite contented, I watched the birds running past me to the forward guns. I was placed in an open space, and on either side, some forty yards off, two large and thick oak trees shut me out from the guns to right and left. The beaters drew level, and then had passed me some distance, when of a sudden all the birds in the beat began to fly back over me, and directly between these two trees. I had a very good loader, and at them we went with a will, and in less than ten minutes the whole hundred cartridges were disposed of, while hardly any one else fired a shot. This was "taking a back seat" with a vengeance, and I could not help feeling rather shy about the matter, yet the birds were all returning to a part of the cover we had already beaten, and would have been lost, as far as that day was concerned. My loader said I got seventy-four; but the firing was so fast, I had no idea myself what the score was.

At the end of the beat, it turned out a stop, who should have kept in a ditch outside the cover, had left his place and taken up a position inside it, and so that every bird could see him, and thus they were all, most unexpectedly, headed back to me.

There is one matter on which keepers are often careless, and that is gun-cleaning, and we find but few who will take the trouble to do this properly, or to see that it is well done by their assistants. It is, indeed, unpleasant to be handed a gun, the stock, grip, and fore-end of which are almost dripping with oil, while an examination discloses that the insides of the barrels are not half bright, and that incipient rust is forming on the extractors, triggers, and breech-ends of the barrels.

Hares give very poor sport when killed in cover, as they rarely go at any pace, and we have heard it asserted, that which they offer in the open is but little better. With this, however, we cannot agree, for shooting them in the open is one of the highest tests of marksmanship, and only a really good shot will kill

them well; that is, laid out stone dead with no squalling or kicking, and no wounds to be found more than a few inches behind the shoulder; and wherever anyone standing at a cover side, out of which the hares are being driven across the open, is seen to bowl over a good few in this style, he may at once be put down as a good shot.

We well remember the laughter which arose one evening in the dining-room of an old house in Perthshire, after a long day's tramp in line for white hares. The ladies had joined us at lunch, and afterwards two of them insisted on walking with the guns. Each lassie selected her laddie, and off we went; but an hour of it soon satisfied the two ladies, and the whole party did not meet again till dinner-time; and then, to break a deadly pause in talk, one of the ladies innocently said to her host, "Oh! do tell me why all the hares Mr. A. shot kicked and cried so piteously, while all those Mr. B. killed never even moved." A. was a guardsman with a large fortune, and B. was only a subaltern in "the common army;" but A.,

MUFF'S WORK.

a thorough good fellow, was the first to break the silence, and lead the laugh against himself, and as the whole party were close friends, it could not be suppressed.

A hare shot at broadside on should be kept in view as long as possible, for, like deer, they will sometimes run on a good distance though shot through the heart. As for shooting at them running away end on, a good man will not make the attempt if they are over thirty yards away; but the bad one always tries this sort of shot at any distance, and if a clean miss is not made, a broken hind leg is the frequent result, and a long chase with the retriever may or may not add it to the bag.

And, oh! for the retrievers to be met with in the field. Certainly, seven out of ten are worthless, except for picking up dead birds off bare grass, and for this purpose a two-legged one is preferable. It is quite wonderful the number of "Neros" encountered each season, who run in, are shouted at, and flogged, and who never by any chance retrieving a

running bird yet dash helter-skelter into "corners," and scatter the pheasants in every direction, the while calling forth anathemas of "Shoot the brute!"—which, by the way, of course, no one ever does. It is little short of wonderful that men should be content to take such dogs about, under the delusion that they are of any use. How pleasant it is to be posted in a good place in the best partridge drive of the day, and to have for a neighbour a friend with a "Nero!" The moment the first shot is fired, he is off at full gallop. Then, what shouting, what whistling, and what yelping when he comes back to be thrashed; and by the time this is over, every bird on the beat is well acquainted with the position of "Nero" and his master, and, wherever else they may fly, timely warning has been given them not to venture that way. And thus, where one ought to have had twenty or thirty pretty shots had no noise been made, the drive will come to an end, and the owner of "Nero," and the friends to right and left of him, will hardly have used a cartridge.

An unpleasant adventure happened to an old friend

of the author's, who now, alas! has joined the great majority. Some years ago he was presented with a "Nero," and the first time he had the dog in the field he was "all over the place," till at last our friend caught him by the neck, and stooping low to give power to the lash, proceeded to try the effect of a flogging.

At the first touch of the lash "Nero" howled loudly, and on hearing his cries another retriever promptly went to the rescue of his unlucky brother, and stealing up behind "Nero's" master pinned him deeply in the seat of honour. Then indeed arose a din—"Nero" yelping, his master swearing, the attacking dog growling, and his owner shouting himself hoarse, and all the party joining in and running up to beat the brute off. The combined attack soon set our friend free, but only to find himself badly bitten and bleeding freely. As good luck would have it, a doctor was one of the party; and no sooner had the injured man announced his intention of making tracks to the village medico, with a view to cauterization, than this

gentleman nobly came to the rescue, and suggesting a retirement behind a haystack hard by, gallantly offered to suck our friend's wounds. After some hesitation, the offer was accepted. No harm ensued from the bite, and as soon as the wounds were healed, many was the laugh, and joke, we all had about the affair.

No mention has hitherto been made of one of the shooter's best friends—the humble bunny; that nimble little creature which the late Lord Derby wittily described as being "three inches too short." In addition to puzzling many very good shots, their engaging little habits have taxed the brains of some of our most learned judges when summing-up in trials on the question of damages caused by them. They have put thousands of pounds into the pockets of all members of the legal profession; they have set by the ears landlord, shooting-tenant, and farmer, and have been the cause of millions of words both spoken and written; but, in spite of all, the rabbit yet remains a staple article of our food supply and

sport. A rabbit smothered in onions is still a good dish anywhere, and so, likewise, is the sport they offer.

Sometimes very easy to kill, at others very easy to miss, all sportsmen are ready to engage in the fun of a rabbit day. Enormous bags have been made in warrens, but the best performance of all, to our mind, was that of Sir Victor Brooke, who describes his day as follows:—

"My bag of the 28th September, 1885, consisted of 746 rabbits. I shot with two guns, my cousin, Major Brooke, loading for me. All the rabbits were walked up in rushes and ferns, and I had a keeper and four beaters on each side. The bag was made in the deer-park at Colebrooke, County Fermanagh, and the bunnies were real wild ones, in contra-distinction to warren rabbits. In a warren it would be easy to beat this bag, but with bona-fide wild ones it was a good score. I shot exactly ten hours, and used 998 cartridges, loaded with 43 grains of Schultz and $1\frac{1}{8}$ oz. of No. 5 shot, the little squib cartridges used in big warren days being, to my

mind, useless with downright good rabbits if you want to make a certain bag. My cousin walked with me the greater part of the day and kept the count, and while he was with me the average was 92 out of a 100; second barrels and long shots account for the disparity between this and 746 out of 998 cartridges."

In coming to the end of the shooting portion of this book, the author wishes to state he has tried all he could to avoid touching on matter mentioned in books of sport that he has read. Hints and recollections illustrating the same are all that he has intended to venture on, and he will be thoroughly well pleased should either the one or the other have been of service, or interesting, to any of his readers.

CHAPTER VI.

SALMON FISHING.

YEAR by year it becomes more difficult to secure a really good salmon fishery, and even indifferent and downright bad ones never lack tenants. Those who have leases of good ones rarely give them up, and, should they do so, some favoured friend is put in, and, provided he and the owner agree about price, the water never comes into the market. The moderate fisheries are tightly held on to by those on the look-out for something better, whilst the bad ones never fail to find fresh victims each season. In renting a stretch of river, it is common to learn from the agents that in a certain season a hundred and fifty spring fish were captured up to the middle of May, and no matter if that good take has been made ten years past, it is for ever dinned into the ears of enquirers; and the

scarcity of spring fishing, added to the desire of the angler to secure something, will tend to make one who is young and enthusiastic argue to himself that what has been done before may be done again, and, trusting he is to be the fortunate mortal, the lease is signed, and the rent fixed at a price representing at least a repetition of the much-vaunted score of years gone by.

When the new tenant commences fishing, he soon learns that the fortunate gentleman—a first-class performer with the rod—who killed the boasted hundred and fifty, paid but thirty instead of a hundred and thirty pounds for his season, and that, at the time it was made, his take was considered little short of marvellous. Furthermore, the new man may find the pools from which the large score was chiefly put together have ceased even to exist, and owing to changes in the bed of the river, caused by heavy floods, the very one which ten years ago was the best of all may now be occupied by a thriving colony of rabbits.

In writing of a good fishery, we mean one which

shows a fine average for many years past, for it is impossible to ensure a uniform good take; and all anglers will be able to recall cases of large rents being paid for fishings yielding next to nothing, though for many previous seasons the catch has been large and renowned. Our idea of a good fishery is that each rod on it should get from fifty to a hundred fish during the two months of the best season, and any piece of water showing this amount of sport before the middle of May is worth twice as much as one offering the like attractions in autumn.

In writing of a downright bad fishery, we mean one that has had ten fresh tenants in as many years, and in which the two best months have averaged fifteen fish a rod, while the rent asked has been from seventy to a hundred and fifty or two hundred pounds. Of this sort there are always some in the market, and nothing will ever deter rash anglers from taking them; and it is useless advising fishermen never to rent any water from which they cannot get a return of the sport had on it for several years.

The weekly reports published by many of the Scotch daily papers, and by the *Field* and *Land and Water*, are generally very correct, although, personally, we are not much in favour of them, as it has ever seemed to us rather absurd one cannot kill a stag, or a few brace of grouse, or a salmon, without the same being duly chronicled in print. In the *Field* we have read of eighteen salmon in a day being credited to a gentleman who had killed but one eighteen-pounder, and though the matter was probably a printer's error, or the mistake of a telegraph clerk, and was promptly put right in the issue of the following week, there may yet be plenty of anglers who read of the capture of the eighteen, but who did not see the correction; and anyone doing so would rest convinced the stretch of water on which the great score was reported to be made was of far greater money value than it really was. Whilst writing of mistakes made in sending wires, we cannot refrain from relating a somewhat costly one that occurred to ourselves. On the morning of

the day that Zoedone won the Grand National Steeplechase at Liverpool, we wired from a Scotch village to a London commissioner: "Zoedone, ten pounds to win," and this we handed to a red-haired Scotch lassie before starting out to fish. On returning, we were glad, indeed, to learn we had won a hundred and twenty pounds, and duly sent off a request, asking that our cheque should be sent to the north on the Monday following. The reply to this was a letter, stating our wire had been received, but minus the word "Zoedone"; so nothing had been done! Now, the father of the red-haired lassie was our gillie, and he was at once sent to the Post Office to ask for an explanation, and returned to tell us: "Weel, sir, she thocht the word was something indeecent, and so she joost left it oot"; and dearly as the stupid mistake had cost us, it was impossible to help laughing. We remember, in the spring of 1884 or 1885, *Land and Water* credited the author and two of his friends with a catch of about a hundred spring fish more than had been

taken in the month. On demanding, instead of humbly pleading for, a correction of the damaging mis-statements, the editor curtly refused to alter his published returns; and this decision he adhered to, although the author's fish-book, kept day by day, and letters from each of his friends, with extracts from their "logs" absolutely contradicting the published accounts, were all laid before him. As one of our friends was his own landlord, and the other had a long lease of his fishing, and we ourselves were giving up ours, the matter was not considered worth further powder and shot. Later on, we ascertained the gasconading reporter was a bank clerk at Aberdeen; but as bank holidays are not more plentiful across the Border than in the south, and as on all other lawful days this scribe must have been on his office stool, it has ever puzzled us why he should have been selected to report the doings of many anglers many miles distant from his honourable occupation. His employers are indeed to be congratulated, if he gave them as much for their money as he offered to the

editor of *Land and Water* for his. This reporting is, however, the fashion of the day, and retiring sportsmen have to submit. It is much encouraged by some proprietors and factors, as it is a good gratis advertisement for them; and no great harm is done as long as reports are really accurate, for most shootings and fishings are certainly rented at their very highest value. When, however, their yield appears in print greatly exaggerated, then the tenants may fairly complain that such misleading statements are likely to cause a rise in their rents.

There is one small fault in these reports of which we have heard many complain, viz., that gentlemen and keepers are usually all alike dubbed "Mr.," and unless an angler well knows the river mentioned, it is impossible to tell who is who, or to ascertain if it be fished by amateurs or keepers; and if the greater part of a big river be not fished by gentlemen, then it may be taken for granted the angling is not worth much.

The nets on the Scotch coast and the estuaries,

and in the rivers themselves, work so closely and incessantly that the spring fishings coming up to our ideal standard are few and far between, and none of the English rivers, and but few of the Scotch or Irish ones, approach it. Of the Scotch rivers that can yield such takes in the spring, in Aberdeenshire there are the fishings of Glen Tana, Cambus-o'-May, the Aboyne Castle water, Ballogie, Cairnton, and Blackhall Castle, all on the Dee, and each of these have often exceeded our ideal, and the first-mentioned stretch of water is perhaps the best spring fishing in the kingdom. In Argyleshire there is Lord Breadalbane's part of the Awe. In Inverness-shire, Lord Lovat's part of the Beauly; also the Garry of Loch Oich, and some of the Lochy beats; the Helmsdale in Sutherland, and the Thurso in Caithness. From this it will be seen how scarce is really good spring fishing. The Tweed, the Tay, the Earn, the North Esk, the Deveron, and the Spey are all so closely netted in the spring that on none of them, on any particular beat, can our standard be nearly reached, although

in the autumn months it is at times exceeded. The Earn, the Deveron, the North Esk, and the Don are perhaps the very worst of northern spring rivers; and in all four of them it is quite a rare event to kill a spring fish. These four streams are all very easy to work with the nets, and hardly a fish escapes till they are taken off on the 26th of August; but from that time till the end of the rod-fishing season, the three first named are quite at the top of the tree for autumn sport. The Earn, especially, often yields splendid autumn sport.

On the Dupplin Castle water, the late Lord Dupplin once took twenty-one fish from the Dyke Pool in a short day; and the Earl of Hardwicke, Colonel Oliver Montague, and many others, have had their dozen daily. This October of 1891 we stayed a week with Mr. Brydges Willyams, the present lessee of this water, and, as bad luck would have it, the river ran bank high and dirty the whole of the time; but though rod and line were nearly useless, it was still a great sight to see the fish passing up Dupplin Weir,

and between two and three thousand must have passed up during the seven days of high water. Indeed, I have never before seen fish run so plentifully and so continuously for such a long spell. On the Dyke stream in season 1890, Mr. Willyams and Colonel Cornwall Legh, his lucky visitor, fishing opposite each other, had in a short day twenty-five good fish between them.

Only the largest of the Scotch rivers have been alluded to, but there are many smaller ones which give good sport, and in Sutherland alone there are some half-dozen miniature Speys and Dees running through glorious Highland scenery, and requiring very neat, if not very long casting. Of these, notably, are—the Shin, the Inver, and the Kirkaig; and there was a time when each of these rose to the level of our ideal. There is hardly a county in Scotland that does not own a salmon river; but it is the larger ones that are sought by the angler, for there can be no doubt a twenty-pound fish, struggling for its life, can make a more resolute and dashing effort for

freedom when fighting in deep, rapid, and broad waters, than one of the same weight, doing its utmost, in a small river only some twenty-five yards across.

Nothing can be more exciting in the way of fishing than a prolonged tussle with a big, game fish determined to go down one side of the stream while the rod is on the other, with some seventy yards of water separating them. In such battles, victory often rests with the salmon; but even if worsted in a combat like this, the angler will not feel half so angry as when a break takes place just as the vanquished one is quite close to the gaff. In the latter case, he will have little sympathy with the fish wishing him an abrupt good-bye, whereas in the former case disappointment will be tempered with a feeling of respect for the foe that fought so gallantly; and many a good angler has been heard to exclaim when broken in the heat of the fray, "Confound it! he's off; but such a plucky fighter deserved to escape."

There is no more annoying way of losing a fish than to do so when it is fairly beaten, and has once

been brought within reach of the gaff. The inexperienced gillie has had two tries and missed it each time; and then, by running wildly up and down the bank in pursuit, has repeatedly scared the captive back to the stream and deep water, till at last, just as it is again towed to the bank, the long-enduring hold breaks, and he is gone! Numbers of fish are thus lost each season, and this is a matter to be easily avoided by the fisherman taking absolute command of a nervous or ignorant gaffer.

Should the pool have a shelving beach of sand or shingle, then, as soon as the fish is exhausted, step back some twenty yards from the water, and order the gillie to keep in the rear, and with a little coaxing the fish will allow itself to be hauled into shallow water; as it grounds it will begin to splash and turn on its side, and then, if a gentle strain be kept up, it will soon kick itself high and dry ashore, and the gillie can go quietly forward and tail it.

Should the angler be alone, as soon as the fish is lying on the bank with tail clear of the water, he can

lay the rod down with a nearly tight line and reel handle uppermost, and go down and lift it out for himself; in doing this, a slight detour should be made, so as to avoid walking straight to the head of the fish, and also let the first grip be a good one, for as soon as handled, kicking will commence with all the life that is left. A small fish is naturally more difficult to hold than a large one, as the tail of the former offers but a small grasp to the hand.

In this way we have landed hundreds of fish, and believe it is quite as quick as gaffing, certainly more so than one would be with an unskilled attendant, and it has the advantage of not spoiling any part of the fish for the table.

Even where the water is deep to the banks, fish can be landed in this manner, but of course it takes a longer time than where there is a shelving bank, as the fish now has to be played till he is utterly and entirely exhausted.

If the angler wishes a fish to be gaffed, and knows his attendant is not a great hand at the process, he

will do well to call him behind, and keep him there till the fight is virtually over. When that time arrives, select the easiest-looking place for gaffing and point it out to the gillie; then lead the fish away from it, head up stream, and as soon as it can no longer see the chosen place, send the gillie to the spot and make him kneel down and put his gaff into the water as far as he can reach, and keep motionless. The fish can then be floated down over the gaff, and will see nothing till too late; and the greatest duffer could not want two strokes at such a chance.

By this method the fish will be gaffed from underneath, and it will not be such a pretty or dashing stroke as when the gaff, in the hands of a skilled man, is stretched out over the captive and passed through the back; but when this is done, the fish must always see both gaff and gaffer, and will often be frightened and make bolt after bolt into deep water, and sudden rushes with a short line in shallow water are always dangerous.

Over and over again, we have seen a nervous gillie

prolong a struggle fully ten minutes more than needful. He will perhaps scratch the fish at the first attempt, and so make it extra wild, and then, by running up and down to meet it each time it comes near, he will be the cause of so many short rushes and head and tail splashes, that unless the hold is very good the fish is too often lost at the finish; and under such circumstances the fisherman is fairly entitled to a good growl.

If the angler is alone, the same plan—*i.e.*, that of getting the fish above him and floating it down over the gaff—can be practised; and the heaviest fish we ever killed, a thirty-eight pounder, was secured in this way one August day from the Long Pool of the Taynuilt Hotel water of the Awe. We also once, when alone, lifted a forty-two pound hen fish one February from the Mill-stream Pool on the Crathes water of the Dee; but as she was on the point of spawning, we returned her to the water, hoping that there might be a mate about, although it was of course very late in the season.

The heaviest fish we know of, and saw landed with our own eyes, came from the Awe; it scaled fifty-four pounds, and was captured by the schoolmaster at Taynuilt, in October.

The Awe, indeed, annually yields many big fish, both to the net and the rod, and annexed are the weights of some others, vouched for on unimpeachable authority. Colonel Murray of Polmaise, writes as follows from

"FANNANS, TAYNUILT,
"*July 2nd*, 1891.

"The fish weighed 42 lbs., a male, and measured 26¼ inches in girth, 47½ in length, and was killed in the Bothy Pool, 25th July, 1879. A 'Thunder and Lightning' took his fancy, and I had him out in about ten minutes, and before he was nearly done. The next in size that I have killed in the Awe was 38 lbs. There was a large *salmo ferox* hooked by Mr. Mure in the top pool of the Awe, and killed in the loch some way up the Pass of Brander, which weighed 39½ lbs., and this I should

think the heaviest *ferox* ever killed, certainly with the fly.

"I may mention a curious case of a fly I had, which killed eleven salmon in two days, and was lost in the twelfth fish, on the third day, which went over a fall in the Conon and cut the line. Two other anglers were fishing the river at the same time and never got a fish, and I could not kill another after losing the fly, although I had several of the same pattern dressed by the same man at the same time that the killer was tied. Was this some chance, or some combination of colour?"

Mr. Thorpe of Ardbrecknish, who rents the Inverawe water, also writes to me he got one in his cruive that weighed 52 lbs., but that he has never got one with the rod that was quite 40 lbs., though several times close to it. Sir John Bennett Lawes, who for many seasons rented the upper water of the Awe, which at present Lord Breadalbane keeps in his own hands, tells me he caught in Pol Veri, a fish weighing 54½ lbs.

While on the subject of big fish, we believe that Mr. Arthur Prior's monster is still the heaviest authenticated capture to the rod, and he writes me as follows on the subject:—

"The big fish was carted up to the Castle (Floors) with his fourteen companions, and it was then weighed by His Grace in the presence of the Duchess, Lord Hardwicke, Lord Kensington, and the late Lord Lovat, and was declared to be just over 60 lbs. The next morning at 10 o'clock, the shepherd, bringing in mutton, re-weighed it, and made it but 57½. The *Kelso Mail* the next day described the fish as being 60 lbs., so also did 'Steel,' the fishmonger at Kelso, where it was exhibited."

Mr. Prior has been very lucky in getting big fish, as he also had a forty-pounder, in addition to the big fish, during the same month of November, 1886, and later on in November, 1888, another forty-pounder.

Never permit a kelt to be gaffed, for more often than not the wound will be fatal, and personally

we would rather lose our tackle than put steel into one. On many rivers it is, however, a common practice to land all kelts in this way, and then to fling them back to the water. With a little more patience they can be lifted out and returned unhurt, beyond the exhaustion of the fight, which of itself frequently proves fatal. When replacing a heavy and thoroughly beaten kelt in the water, it should be held by the tail for a short time till it has recovered strength enough to swim. While strongly objecting to any law enforcing the carrying of a landing net, which would absolutely necessitate the services of an attendant, we should yet like to see a penalty placed on gaffing a kelt, and then leave fishermen to their own devices. The law is the avowed champion of their lives, and inflicts a penalty of five pounds on anyone keeping a kelt, but yet it sanctions their destruction by the gaff, and so long as the destroyer throws the poor wounded creature back to the water, and does not keep it in his possession, the law is content; but, surely,

this is an anomaly our fishery law-makers should attend to.

At times unclean fish are landed so well mended, and looking so like the real article, that for a few moments even old hands may be deceived. A peep into the gills will settle the matter, and if there are any white maggots clinging to them it is for certain unclean. From the Dee, the Spey, and the Tay we have landed hundreds of kelt, and have never yet seen one without some of these white parasites, and, *vice versâ*, we have never seen a fresh run spring fish with any of them.

The eyes of the kelt are usually not quite wide open, while in a clean fish the eye is full, round, and prominent. This, however, is not an invariable rule, as we have seen quite fresh run fish with this peculiarity, and we think it possible this drooping of the lid may be caused by the fatigue of the fight against the rod.

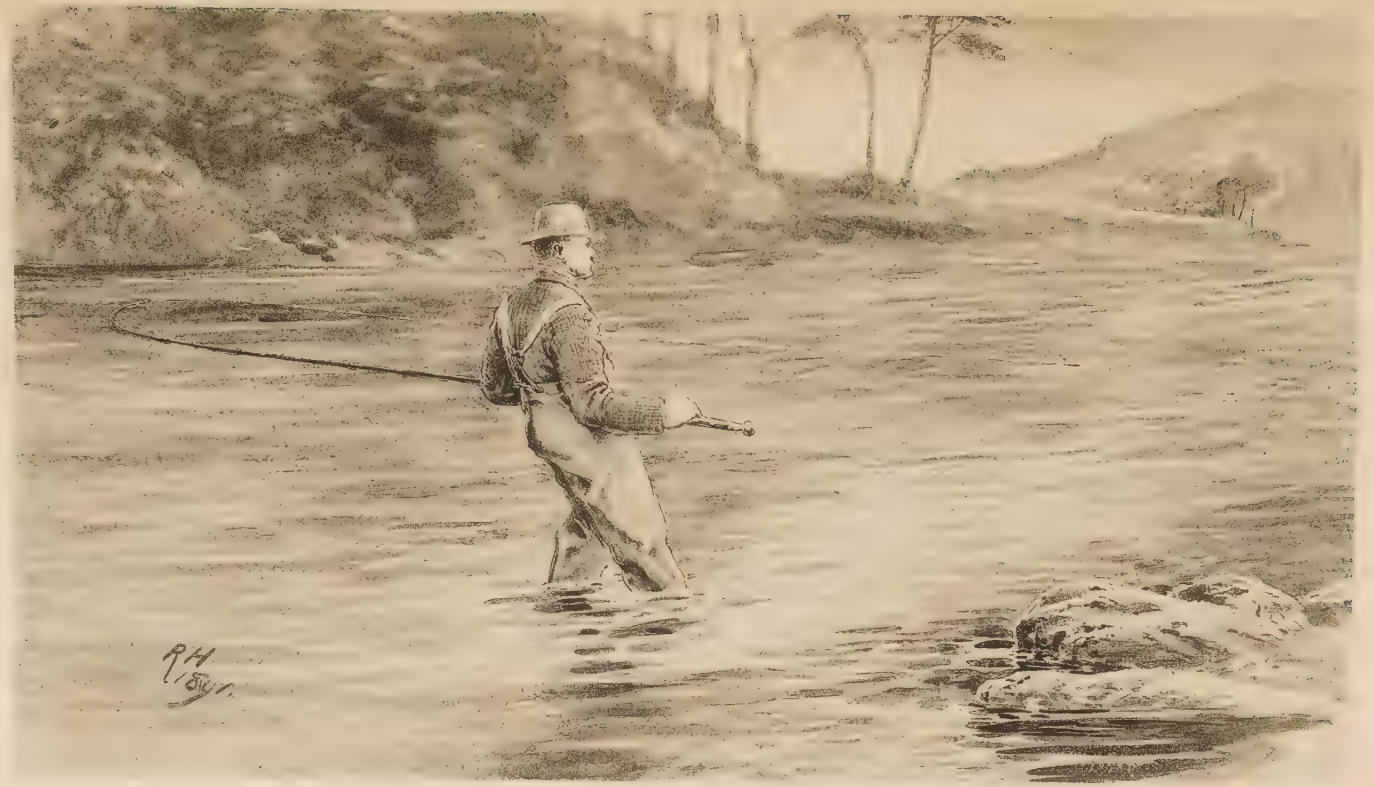
If rivers get very low in the spring diseased kelts may easily be seen, and as at such times there is very

little real fishing to be done, an angler may often get a bit of fun for himself, and, by taking such fish out of the water, do the bailiffs and the river a good turn. A white and diseased fish having been found in an accessible position, cut a long straight twig, something like the top joint of a rod, wrap the line already attached to the rod a few times round it, and bring the hook to the end, and there fix it tightly by a half hitch, so that thus a miniature gaff is formed. Keeping the rod in the left hand, stick the hook into the kelt wherever fancy dictates, and let the twig go. It will soon be pulled clear of the line, and the diseased one can be brought to bank, knocked on the head, and duly buried. We once saw one big kelt so covered with fungus that he was absolutely as white as the paper this is printed on ; but notwithstanding his ailments he made a splendid fight for his life, and took us down several hundred yards of water. This fish we laid hold of by the side of the pectoral fin, as we think a fish thus hooked shows harder fighting than when fouled in any other part of his body, and as the

water was low and bright, his long white form showed every movement, and from start to finish every detail of the struggle could be seen. On the Crathes water of the Dee we once landed three kelts, which had all been recently gaffed and survived the barbarity; but in the same water hardly a day passed that we did not see dead kelts lying in the pools, and those we could reach had mostly been killed by the gaff in the fisheries above.

We did not see all there were, for a colley dog was in the habit of hunting the banks and pulling out the dead kelts for himself. The dog was fat and sleek to perfection, and would take a regular header when the dead fish was in deep water, and would pull it out from a depth of fully eight feet. He knew his business well and never hunted the streams, but went from eddy to eddy and searched the backwaters till he found his breakfast, and when this laid in a deep place he would often have to make many dives before it was secured.

As to what is good time in which to kill a fish, it is



PUTTING A STRAIN ON A "SULKY BRUTE"

an accepted law by many old hands that a pound a minute is smart work. It may be prolonged by a sulky fish; but with the rod in good hands, we hold such an event as a long sulk should not be permitted to happen, unless indeed it is impossible to get below the "sulky brute," for on such occasions all fish at once become "brutes." We have never met with one that could resist, for more than a few minutes, the weight of a long line and a steady pull down stream from the middle of the rod. Out from behind the sulking place it must come, but look out for squalls, as a rush down stream may drown the line; but never mind if it does, and laugh even if the hold be broken, for anything is better than standing still, pulling steadily at a fish for an hour or so; it makes one feel and look like a fool. Therefore, do not be afraid to go even fifty or sixty yards below the sulker, all the while paying out line step by step, and keeping up a heavy strain, with the rod held low and nearly parallel to the water. As the strain begins to tell, the fisherman will get warning of the impending move by

feeling a tug or two as the captive endeavours to keep his place; as he gives way, then upright the rod and get in every inch of line possible. Go up and meet him, if he will let you, and try to get opposite him, and that position once attained the combat should soon be over. At times a fish will sulk in such a position as renders it impracticable to get below him, and then indeed he is almost master of the situation. Various and costly messages may be sent him down the line in the shape of a valuable bunch of keys, which we once saw done, without producing the least effect; the gillie may throw any amount of stones, but when sulking occurs in deep, sluggish water, and there is no boat to be had so that the surly one can be poked out of his lair by oar or sting, and unless the angler has seen he is in to an extraordinary large fish which it would be a glorious matter to take, then it is best to put on a severe strain for twenty minutes or so, and gradually increase it till either the fish moves or something breaks.

We are of opinion that when a fish makes a furious

dash down stream in heavy, broken water, and if the going be very bad, that then it is wiser not to try and keep level with him, but to pick one's way quietly with the rod bolt upright, and so follow on behind him, even if the reel be nearly bare. A time will come when even the wildest fish will be forced to rest for a minute or so, and in that short time one can get in some line and be nearing him preparatory for a fresh start. If an attempt be made to keep level with a mad fish making a rush down white water, and the footing is very bad, it is nearly certain the rod point will be lowered, and that is usually the signal for good-bye.

An angler should remember that in pools on which a boat is used that, when watching it from the opposite bank, it will always look to be more than fairly half way across the stream; and a knowledge of this will do away with many uncharitable feelings, and save even downright wrangles. It is, of course, annoying to see a boat appear to come more than fairly across the stream, to fish one's favourite catch, but the oppo-

site neighbour may have been forbidden to wade, or perhaps the pool can be reached in no other way. Under such circumstances make the best of the matter, for if the banks were changed the chances are the grumbler himself would do precisely the same thing. If the boat be rowed, it does less harm than if a sting be used, which causes greater disturbance by the noise it makes in striking the bed of the river; but in either case, if there be plenty of fish, a pool that has been "boated" can be cast with confidence half an hour afterwards. Indeed, we have come down our side of a pool immediately behind a boat fishing from the opposite bank, and have hooked fish so close to it that the party afloat have had to pull out of the way to let us down. In some fisheries the march will begin or end in the middle of a pool, and this is often a matter productive of unfriendliness between two anglers who are both good fellows and should be the best of friends. The old-fashioned plan was for the owner of the upper part of the pool to come to the march, and fish over into the

next water as far as he could cast. On many rivers this has been altered to the fairer method of placing a stake twenty-five yards above the actual boundary, and below this mark the angler on the upper water is not supposed to put his feet.

There are two sorts of very bad fishing neighbours. The worst is the case of the opposite bank being let to an hotel, the landlord of which places no limit on the number of rods, and to fish opposite such a water as this is terribly uphill work, as each pool gets incessantly splashed over all day. That fine stretch of the Awe that is now let with the Taynuilt Hotel is a notable and melancholy example of this sort of fishery. There are, to the best of my recollection, some fourteen pools on this water, and of course some are high-water catches and others *vice versâ*, and they are rarely all in order on the same day; but the late landlord of Taynuilt Hotel let almost anyone fish, and I once counted eighteen rods out; and that sort of thing went on for many years, and the pools on the opposite bank which the

hotel anglers could reach were entirely spoilt. There is now, happily, a new landlord at Taynuilt, and he proposes to limit the rods to six; but even this is twice as many as the water will fairly carry. In our opinion it is not quite fair to one's opposite neighbour to let a fishery to an hotel without strictly limiting the number of rods; and this is carefully done on the Dee, and anyone getting a rod from the hotels at Aboyne and Ballater can make sure of an ample beat to himself. The Taynuilt Hotel water has, however, recently changed owners, and, owing to the discovery of some missing documents in the muniment room at Inverary Castle, the Duke of Argyle has been enabled to establish his right to it, although the late possessors, the Campbells of Loch Nell, had owned it for over 150 years.

The second worst neighbour an angler can have is the one who does not fish himself, and gives indiscriminate leave to friends, tradespeople, and servants; and this is a matter certainly very trying to the temper of any keen fisherman renting the opposite

bank. We recollect a case of this sort where the fishing was given to a family, and daily the father, the three sons, two daughters, and two visitors turned out, and as there were but eight pools, each one had more or less an occupant all day. At length the matter was laid, in the most courteous manner, before the donor of the fishing to the family, and the representation being taken in good part, the family rights were at once limited to two rods a day.

Should anyone be lucky enough to take a fish so heavy that it is not weighable by his steelyard, there is yet an ingenious method of doing this, which was first shown to the author by Mr. C. M. P. Burne, who rents Pitcroy on the Spey; and as we had fished for thirty seasons before hearing of the "dodge," it is probable there are others in the same plight. Suppose the fish is judged to be thirty pounds, and the steelyard will only show up to five-and-twenty, then pick out a stone of over ten pounds weight, tie a cord round it and weigh it exactly; pass the end of the cord through the ring at the top of the steelyard, and

fasten it to the hook at the bottom. Then put the fish on, and before moving the indicator on the scale the weight of the fish will have to lift up the weight of the stone, and that, added to what the scale then shows, will be the total. Thus, a thirty pounder having raised a twelve-pound stone will lower the indicator on the scale to eighteen pounds.

The author has but a very few words to say on rods and tackle, for that has already been very thoroughly done by many others. Rods appear to us to be very much like guns, and because A. can throw his thirty-five yards of line with *his* pattern, that will be no reason why B. should do the same with a similar one, yet B. will throw quite as well and as far as A. with a rod of a totally different build; and, then, in steps C., who will beat them both with something wholly different in shape from either. The make of the rod with which an angler is "entered" is the one generally continued; it may be modified in later years, and perhaps improved on, but the build of the rod the angler starts with will leaven all the later

SPEY CAST, NO. 1.

ones. Personally, we own to liking a spliced rod better than a ferruled one; but when in two pieces they are so difficult of conveyance and so troublesome to put together that it is pleasanter to use the ferrules, unless going to fish in the same place for several days in succession, and where the rod once put up need not be taken down until it is time to depart. The author swears by Farlow and eighteen feet of green-heart; but of late years we confess to having seen such fine rods of glued-up cane that our allegiance to the old wood is wavering. Their lightness is a great recommendation, and they cast as far in the face of a wind as the stoutest green-heart, and there is no doubt our old favourites will eventually be discarded in favour of the more modern invention.

The Spey-rod like the Spey-cast, is a thing of itself, and to the beginner, no matter how good he may be at the overhead business, both rod and cast seem hopeless and impossible; these rods are always spliced, somewhat whippy, and the top joint, instead of being straight, turns up, and is most unsightly to the

uneducated eye. In commencing to practise the Spey-cast, the novice will often wind himself up in his line; and lucky if he do not drive the hook into his ears or shoulders. After a period of this excitement, suddenly the cast comes to him as far as a short line goes, but it will take him weeks ere he can put out thirty yards.

"Hoo aisey" it looks, to see "old Crookey"—we beg his pardon, Mr. Cruickshank—as the *Field* and the *Scotsman* call him, putting out forty yards, while standing dryshod on two little stones on the bank of Pol Brock on the Wester Elchies water; we believe he held the title of "King of the Spey" for many years, though Robertson, the famous Tulchan fisherman, and Shiach at Aikenway could each run him close. The Spey-cast is an exceedingly useful one to learn, and all anglers should try and attain it, and when well done the fly lights on the water as true and as gently, and with no more splash than if propelled by the overhead cast. Much has been written about this same cast, and my friend Major Traherne,

SPEY CAST, NO. 2.

in the Badminton Library, has taken much pains both by word and by diagram to explain the matter, and doubtlessly his efforts have been of great use to his brother anglers. It occurred, however, to the author, that if he could get this cast illustrated by someone combining angler and artist, that then such illustrated diagrams might be of still further use to the beginner. In his friend Mr. R. R. Holmes, Her Majesty's Librarian at Windsor Castle, he has had the good luck to meet with this happy combination of art and sport, and the three accompanying drawings of the spey-cast were executed on Speyside itself; and the author ventures to think that never before has the spey-cast been so well illustrated, and all credit is due to Mr. Holmes for his able handling of a difficult subject. This cast is made in three distinct motions, and like the overhead one, is essentially a "time" cast.

Plate No. 1 represents the angler having raised the rod upright with one steady and moderately quick rise, so as to bring the line to the surface; No. 2,

shows the line as it is immediately before the downward stroke is made; and No. 3 depicts the result of this, and the fly is speeding in graceful curls to its destination. We also quite agree with Major Traherne, that there is no line so easy or pleasant to cast as a hand-made silk one of about thirty-three yards in length, spliced on to a hundred yards of reel line. Farlow makes these silk lines right well, and dresses them to keep supple for many seasons; and, of course, when one end of the taper begins to wear it should be reversed, and for fully fifteen years we have used nothing else. We consider the reel is best made of thin gun-metal, for though this is slightly heavier than wood or vulcanite, both these substances are easily cracked by knocks or tumbles, while the metal one is far less vulnerable, and even if badly dented can usually be put right again by any blacksmith. A reel should run lightly; in fact, so much so as to allow a fish being struck from it. Should a pluck come at the fly during any moment of inattention—and if fishing for hours without an

SPEY CAST, NO. 3.

offer the sharpest look-out is apt to relax—then the fish does not get such a violent jerk as will be the case if the reel is a stiff one; such a rise not having been seen, the rod is mechanically and sharply raised as the pull is felt, and in doing this a too severe strain is often put on the tackle, and many times we know of the hook being left in the fish. In streams, and even in steadily moving waters, we are all against working the fly; but as it sweeps into slack water, some motion should be given to it, and even though the point of the rod rise and fall a yard with each movement, if there is a long line out, the fly itself will be moved but a few inches. On many rivers there are high, steep banks overhanging the pools, and on "dour" days it is instructive to hand the rod over to the gillie, and creeping to the edges of such banks, the fly can be watched as it explores the depths below. With a small river and a bright sun it is easy to see the fish lying behind their resting-places, and in such a state of affairs they will frequently bolt in all directions as the fly swings

over them, and not for some minutes will they return to their accustomed places in the stream. At rare intervals a fish will rise under such circumstances, but he does not come with a dash, but with one sweep of his tail will shoot from his shelter, and falling well below the fly and holding himself stationary in the current by a trembling movement of fins and tail, his mouth opens, the fly appears to fall into it, while with a downward sweep he drives the hook home.

Under such circumstances, to shout "Look out! he's coming," will almost always save the fish, as there are but few who can keep their hands quiet while such an intimation is excitedly made. Mechanically the point is raised and the fly snatched away, and rarely will the fish return.

We remember, one bright June day, fishing the Cruive Pool of the Awe with a small "Blue Doctor" we had dressed that morning with a very spare wing and on purpose for the sunshine. Overhanging this pool is a high bank, on which our old friend and

attendant, Peter, had posted himself. The cast was drawn blank and not a fin showed, and when we again joined forces and learnt from him that eight different fish had all come to look at the fly, we were indeed surprised. Some two hours later the pool was re-fished, but this time the author and Peter changed places, and from our vantage ground we saw five fish come and have a look at the small "Sun" fly so neatly offered them; but each returned to his lair not in the least alarmed, and not one of these thirteen fish broke the water, for had they done so they must have been seen, as this is a still, "oily" pool, and from this we think it may be taken for granted the angler on a level with the river little knows what goes on in the depths below. Having waited till the sun went off this pool, we again fished it with the same fly used the first time of trying it, and two fish fell victims to its fascinations; but the light was then so bad that Peter could not see if others were moved. Even in the very hottest and brightest of weather a keen angler need not quite despair,

and if he can see a fish "turning" he had better stay and offer fly after fly, and perhaps he may bully it into laying hold of one of them. An instance of this kind happened to us on the Usk, one scorching day in July. The late Sir Sandford Graham and the author were staying at the Three Salmons Hotel, in Usk, and fishing the association water, and as we were not believers in very early starts, it was often ten o'clock before a move was made. On that particular day we found "Pen Carrig" vacant, so Sir Sandford continued on his way to find another pool below. "Rhil-a-derry" and "Coed-a-prior" were both occupied, and from the rod on this latter pool he learnt that everything else lower down was also full, an unusual number of ticket-holders having come out that day. He therefore returned, and we took it turn and turn about to fish over a nice little salmon that had been seen to rise. Thus in about every twenty minutes the choice of a fresh dainty was offered, but all to no purpose, and at last fourteen tasty morsels had been dangled

over his nose, and evening began to come. It was then our turn to try with a fifteenth, but giving it up in disgust, Sir Sandford had another cast, and at once hooked and shortly landed our stubborn friend—a nice fish of fourteen pounds.

There is no doubt one of the great secrets of success is perseverance, and any fairly good fisherman who will never stop working, who will run from pool to pool and eat his lunch while so doing, will kill more fish than a better angler who thinks it is going to be a bad day, and takes it easy if he does not get a rise in the first pool he puts fly over.

Keep the lure in the water all day, hold the point low, and fish deep; do not watch the point, but keep the eyes on the spot where the fly is judged to be. By doing this a "boil" will be seen which might escape notice if the eyes were on the point of the rod, and when such is seen the fish can of course be offered another fly.

At times the gillie may be heard to say he is "Just thinking it will be a gold day," or a "silver one,"

as the case may be, and unless the fisherman wishes to make his attendant miserable, let him put on a fly with gold or silver tinsel, as the case may be; and, more often than not, the man's long experience of the state of the river and the atmosphere will prove him to be in the right. Salmon are odd mixtures of shyness and boldness, and their sight is extraordinarily quick. In clear water we have often stood on bridges and dropped small stones on fish lying under them, and the fish has invariably seen the stone coming and dashed off before it struck the water, though in the course of a few minutes it would return to the place it left. When a fish is seen to move, many anglers at once conclude the resting spot is exactly beneath the splash; as a rule, it is some yards below and a little to one side of where the water was broken. That very fish will, however, often take the lure above where he showed, or even a good bit below, and this we think is also a fact from watching their habits from high banks and bridges; and we are quite sure they see further afield

than is generally supposed, and though the accepted theory is not to advance more than a yard at each cast, we think quite two yards may be taken at every fresh throw; and that when fishing in this quicker style, if there be a taking fish in the pool it will be equally certain to see the lure, for a fish that wishes to feed will be sure to be keeping a sharp look out on all sides. In this way a long pool can be fished twice over, with two different flies, in the same time that the cast-at-every-yard angler will take to fish it once. If a fish rises and does not hook, then throw the line gently on the bank without reeling up, change the fly for a smaller one of the same pattern, and try him again in a few minutes from exactly the same spot. Fish may often be seen splashing at the sides of a narrow and heavy rush of water, and the eddies formed by such streams are often dead or even moving gently up stream. Such waters are best fished by commencing at the tail of the pool and casting into the rapid, and as soon as the fly nears the still water the angler

should walk smartly up stream for three or four paces. By this means the fly will be kept "alive" and working in the slack, and thus this sort of awkward place can be fairly well fished, and if salmon are to be seen splashing in such situations they are usually hungry ones.

It may be fancy, but we prefer the old gut-fly loop to the more modern metal-eyed one, as the former seems to swim the fly with more life; also, to a great extent, we are believers in every river having its own special flies; at any rate, it is certain the local ones are lures shown by long experience to be killers. At the same time, we are averse to having a VERY large selection of flies, and any angler who is provided with various sizes of Blue Doctors, Jock Scots, and Gordons for "gaudies," and the Glen Tana, the Killer and the Grey Heron of the Spey for "spiders," never need fear of catching fish wherever he may go. The four last-mentioned flies not being so well known as the two first-named celebrities, the dressing is appended for the use of

those who tie their own, and all anglers should learn to do this. Apart from the pleasure of killing with flies of one's own making, the amusement will while away many a long day when the river is unfishable, and even a wet Sabbath—of course, not if within reach of the kirk and two services — may be shortened if surrounded by fur, feathers, silk, wax and tinsel; but tell it not to "Sandy," or for ever those flies will come under the ban of unlucky ones.

The Killer:

Tag. Silver tinsel.

Tail. Red saddle feather of golden pheasant.

Body, commencing from tail. Yellow, orange, red, and blue mohair, equally divided and sparely put on, silver tinsel over.

Hackle. Grey heron at shoulder, and over it a red saddle feather of golden pheasant.

Wing. Two slips of red turkey or gled hawk set wide apart.

The Gordon:

Tag. Silver twist.

Tail. Topping and red ibis.

Butt. Black.

Body. Two turns of orange-yellow floss silk and the rest rich-claret floss, silver tinsel, and, if the fly be large, then silver twist by the side of it.

Hackle. Claret from commencement of claret floss, and light blue at shoulder, or in a small fly a jay hackle will do.

Wing. Two feathers of gold pheasant ruff, reaching to black butt, over these a mixture of gold pheasant tail, peacock, white, yellow, red, and blue fibres of dyed swan, a long topping over all, jungle cock cheeks and a black head.

If the fly be dressed large, one or two sword-feathers of the gold pheasant should be added over the gold pheasant ruff feathers.

The Glen Tana:

Tag. Silver twist.

Tail. Red saddle feather of gold pheasant.

Body. Half yellow, half claret mohair, sparely

put on, gold tinsel, and, if the fly be large, then silver twist laid on beside it.

Hackles. Black heron laid on from commencement of claret wool, and teal hackle at shoulder.

Wings. Two long slips of red turkey or gled hawk, set on well apart.

The Spey Grey Heron:

Tag. Two turns of gold tinsel.

Body. Barely one-third orange floss and rest black floss, gold tinsel put on very wide, and between the turns a single strand of fine silver twist; in a large fly two strands can be used, each equidistant from the other.

Hackles. Grey heron from half way up, and teal at shoulder.

Wing. Mallard.

In spite of sombre look and meagre appearance, caused by the absence of tail and the shortness of the wing, this fly is a very killing one wherever quiet flies and sparely-dressed hooks are in favour, and we have rarely failed to score when giving it a trial.

Whether wading trousers should be buckled tightly round the waist, or be held up by braces and left open, is a question on which anglers differ. Personally, we choose the open plan, as it is not so hot and better ventilation is ensured; also, accounts vary very much from those who have taken involuntary headers, some stating they can swim quite comfortably while others tell a very different tale. Our own experience is, luckily, very small, and the only ducking we ever had while wading in trousers was one April day into some ten feet of water of the north side of the Kirk Pot at Glen Tana. A large piece of rock broke away and we went souse in, and on striking out and looking up we could clearly see our feet above our head. For two or three strokes we fought our hardest to reverse the position, and before we had any wish to try further we were floated against a piece of projecting rock, and clinging on quickly pulled ourself out. Although smoking at the time of immersion the pipe was not lost, and, moreover, the rod was kept hold of, which perhaps had something to do with the poor progress

made in swimming. John Power, one of Sir William Cunliffe Brooks' keepers, was with us that day, and, fortunately, was wearing a long blue woollen sailor's jersey; so, as the sun was shining brightly, we stripped and donned this garment, and raced up and down the bank to keep warm, while the wet ones having been wrung out were spread on a bush to dry. After a certain time, the wind and the sun were pronounced to have done their work, so, dressing again, we fished the day out.

Most anglers have the feet of their waders, as well as the brogues that cover them, made much too small; for in February and March it is most desirable to keep as warm as possible while in the water, and if there be the least tightness or pressure on ankles or feet the cold becomes almost painful. For spring wading in snow water we encase ourselves from head to foot in Shetland wool, and tucking the ankles of the drawers into a pair of soft worsted socks, over these come a pair of very warm and long knicker stockings, followed of course by the ordinary raiment

of everyday life. Thus attired we walk to the river, and then, before putting on the waders, a pair of soft lambswool sleeping-socks complete the heating apparatus; but all this will be of no use if the feet are cramped up by either the wader or the brogue. If, however, all fits easily, then thus arrayed we can stay in the water in the coldest weather for an hour at a stretch without being numbed or miserable. Brogues are preferable to boots for wearing over all, as they are quicker to take off and put on when walking from pool to pool; and if the fisherman have a gillie with him and has to walk half-a-mile or more to the next pool, he is strongly advised not to do this in his waders, for should he do so and then wade into deep snow water he will feel the cold far more than if he had taken off his waders for the walk; and in addition to the comfort, the mackintoshes will also wear longer if carried.

The advantages of very large brogues were forced on our notice while fishing out the last week of season 1890 on the Spey at Aikenway, with Mr.

W. S. Menzies of Culdares. Arriving there from Gaick Forest and deer-stalking, we were minus brogues, and Aberdeen was wired to, but they were sent too small; so Jock Shiach, the fisherman, kindly lent us his, which were just about twice as large as seemed needful, and so much so, that it was a difficult matter to stay in them on dry land; but never before had we waded in such comfort, and with so few stumbles, and as the Spey offers the very worst of wading, we are sure the very large flat shoe is the right thing. Wading is quite an art of itself, and wants a quick eye and good nerves; but the great thing when fishing a very bad place, when the toes are invisible and the pool strange, is to move very slowly, and with a nearly straight leg shuffle the feet round rocks and stones and avoid in any way climbing over them; also be careful not to stir the rear foot before the advanced one has a firm hold. During our stay at Aikenway, mine host made a curious catch of a fish; he had hung his coat—a sleeveless one—on a rail when walking to the top of the pool, and having fished

down to his garment, halted to put it on, and so save the trouble of going back. Laying his rod on the bank with the line out, he ran to the garment, and while slipping it on, a fish hooked, and began to make the reel sing; the rod was speedily in good hands, and a fifteen-pounder was laid on the bank in due course.

To some bigoted anglers bait-fishing is a detestable method of catching salmon, and by the very rabid ones, this has been described as equivalent to shooting a hare on its form. Well, if it was *really impossible* to kill a hare running, then, we confess, if we were hare-shooting and they were as few and far between as, alas! they are in many counties, and we wanted one badly, we would certainly shoot it sitting. There are many reaches of water through which spring fish run without a halt, and as they will not take a fly when travelling, and will yet take a bait, we consider that fact to be a very good reason for using one. Admitting we would rather catch a fish with a fly than by any other lure, we own to being

so constituted, that to come home blank is the abomination of desolation. To work hard at anything the whole day long for nothing does not suit our temperament, for after such an event, dinner is not enjoyed, sleep fails us, breakfast next morning is hateful, and peace of mind and content can only again be restored by a tight line and the music of the reel. In sport, as in all other matters, live and let live has ever been our motto; and without going the length of some bait-fishers, who call the fly an antiquated old lure, we do not hesitate to resort to bait of every sort, and by so doing, more often than not, a duck's egg for the day is saved. No one who dislikes bait-fishing need practise it; and those who object to it are usually fishermen having some of the picked fishings of a river, in which the salmon will lie for weeks, and if they will not rise one day they will be sure to do so on another.

Fishers of the natural minnow are often even railed at and complained of by those who use the phantom, prawn, and worm; and if this is not a case of pot

and kettle, there never was one. This petty jealousy usually arises from the fact that the prawn and phantom man either will not take the trouble to procure the natural bait, or, having got it, cannot learn how to use it. This class of angler is often the one who begins to fish at fifty, and in two seasons is full of advice and instruction to those who have been at it since fourteen; therefore, we advise everyone desirous of making a good score, and who has a stretch of water through which the fish pass rapidly upwards, to go at them with every lure he can bring into play. As to a natural minnow spoiling a pool, it is all stuff and rubbish. On a cold, cloudy day a fresh run fish will be more likely to take a natural minnow than a fly, as the hungry one can so easily see and smell that the former is genuine; and, thus, small wonder it should be preferred to a bunch of feathers, which, like the first oyster, will have to be taken on trust and in the hope it is good. At the same time, there are distinctly fly days, minnow days, phantom days, and prawn days.

As to clean fish or kelt not eating in fresh water, we do not credit one word of it, for minnows, prawns, or worms are all devoured by both. If plenty of fish are seen in a pool on a cold and cloudy day, and they refuse fly and bait, it is simply an indication that none of them are hungry, although a short time afterwards some may have acquired an appetite, and then if a fly comes over these there is a very good chance of hooking one which is in no ways spoilt by the natural minnow previously offered. It must not be forgotten that of natural minnow there is but one kind, while there are hundreds of flies, and that the right one is presented must always be uncertain. Whilst on a visit to Mr. E. Brydges Willyams, who, in 1885, was the lessee of the Park Fishery of the Dee, we had a day on the Keith Pool when it was in grand order. It is a long pool, every bit of it fishes, and the salmon were splashing all over it. Commencing with a "Glen Tana," one was landed; the second time over it a "Grey Heron" was used with a like result; this was followed by a natural

minnow, and all for nothing. Then the "Gordon" had a turn, and one more fish came to bank, and lunch was eaten briefly but happily. Recommencing with the "Gordon," another fish was hooked and landed; then followed a blank draw with the "Yellow Eagle," and, finally, the minnow took other two and made up the half-dozen; weights — twenty-eight, twenty-three, twelve, ten, ten, and eight pounds.

On the very same day, our host, fishing the pools of the upper water with fly only, "tied" us with six other fish, weighing twenty-four, nineteen, twelve, ten, ten, and nine pounds. This was the best take of autumn fish that we have ever seen, as all this dozen were as *bright as spring fish*, and all had sea lice on them; and our joint total for the eight last days of September was forty-three fish, weighing five hundred and twenty pounds. Now, when ceasing to flog the Keith Pool we had fished it with five flies and two minnows, and though there was any quantity of salmon left in it, we think we had an offer from every hungry one, for in addition to the

six captured, one more was pricked and two others "came short."

There is one great advantage the real minnow has over the fly, and that is in the attraction it possesses for "travellers." These, it is well known, will rarely halt for a mouthful of feathers; but that is not at all the case when the lure is a big, fat minnow. Also, this bait will take on frosty mornings and while the ice is yet on the sides of the pools, and all anglers are aware that fly-fishing under such circumstances is nearly useless. Long experience has shown this to be the fact, and anglers accept it as gospel, though why it should be so has ever been a mystery.

Once when fishing a fly one April over Birkenbad Pool of the Crathes water of the Dee, a small company of running fish came into it, and shortly began to show as they went out at the head of the pool. Quickly discarding the fly-rod for the spinning one, we were in time to capture two of the runners in that pool, and then, racing up stream at best pace, we headed them at the top of the

"Floating Bank." There other two were brought to the gaff, while the rest of the school continued their journey; but once again running forward to "Chapel-of-Ease" Pool, one more was accounted for. Now, with a fly not one of these fish could have been captured; but, by the aid of the merry minnow, what would have been a blank day was converted into a red-letter one; for, on the lower reaches of the Dee, it is a very rare event to take five clean fish on a spring day below Banchory Bridge, and we doubt if it has ever been done again.

We once made a very remarkable catch of a fourteen-pound fish out of the "Sandy Havens," on the Kineskie water of the Dee, and landed the same without a hook in it! This fish gave a splendid run, and on eventually being gaffed we discovered it was not hooked at all; the minnow had swung under one of the pectoral fins, and the triangle catching over the line had made a loop, which had drawn so tight that it took us longer to disentangle than if the hook had been in the usual place.

Salmon may also be taken with dace, gudgeon, bleak, par, prawns boiled and unboiled, shrimps and worms, as well as by all sorts of artificial minnows and spoons; but neither by a mock representation of prawn or worm have we ever heard of an authenticated capture. Of all these different lures, the natural minnow is the most killing (when it kills at all) and the prettiest to use.

The rod should be of green-heart throughout, not too stiff, and from fourteen to fifteen feet in length; the rings of course upright, and the top and bottom ones of revolving steel, whereby much wear and tear of the line is saved.

The reel should be large enough to take some seventy yards of "stuffing," together with a hundred yards of the so-called American line, size letter F, for though the material of which the "M. C. & Co." lines are made comes from America, the lines themselves, we believe, are made in Glasgow—and none the worse for that; and we have imported them from America, and found them no better. They are

not expensive, twelve shillings and sixpence for the hundred yards; but the longer they are kept in store before being used the better they wear, as lapse of time hardens the dressing. They are, however, necessarily so thin that a few days' fishing will spoil the ten yards getting the greatest friction; therefore, like all other tackle, only in a greater degree, this especially requires carefully looking over and testing each day. As soon as the varnish wears off, the line becomes so sodden when in use that the least wind blows it into kinks, and makes it impossible to throw even a fairly long cast. For this reason, the minnow-fisher must perforce part with a portion of his line every few days; and as soon as this has been several times repeated, then the value of the stuffing becomes apparent. The Malloch reel is a pleasant one to use in a high wind, as it does away with any chance of the line being blown into a tangle; but, except under those conditions, we prefer to throw from the hand, for with this reel it is impossible to cast to an inch, and the action of righting it after making each

cast allows the bait to sink very deep. Though this is desirable in high water, in a reverse state of affairs it lets the lure sink so far under the surface that it is for ever catching in rocks; and anyone fishing a Malloch reel in low water will get hanked up, and have to break much oftener than if the cast were fished off the hand.

A single gut trace a yard long, with three swivels in it, looped on to a similar one of treble gut, six feet and six swivels, entirely does away with any kinking of the reel line; and Brown, the phantom-man of Aberdeen, supplies these of excellent quality at a moderate price, and for flies and all other Dee tackle we can strongly recommend him. In the Badminton Library there is an illustration of the tackle used for spinning the natural minnow, and as we ourselves gave it Mr. Cholmondley Pennell on purpose for that book, as he very courteously acknowledges, we think no apologies need be made for referring our readers to that work.

A large carpet or darning needle with the eye cut

through is the best form of baiting needle, and these may be very quickly made in quantities by heating the eyes to soften the steel; and as soon as they are cold a file will cut a slit in the eye, and then the metal is re-tempered by again being heated to redness, and while still aglow it is dipped in oil or cold water.

To bait the tackle, pass the eye end of the needle into the mouth of the minnow (previously killed by a finger flip on the head), and out at the vent; then hook on the gut loop (which must be a whipped loop, not a knotted one) to which the hooks are tied, and draw it carefully through till they are in position. Should the needle catch in the minnow, twiddle it round between the thumb and forefinger and it will pass smoothly; then hold the bait firmly in the left hand, thread the lead on to the gut, and press it well home, and if this be not done thoroughly the minnow will not spin properly. Before the lead is inserted in the bait, it should be slashed with a knife so as to prevent it slipping out of its mouth.

The gut between the two triangles should be doubled, as it keeps them stiff after being in the water a long time, and so hinders them from catching over the trace when casting.

The minnow is *par excellence* a cloudy-day and cold-weather bait, and, unless the water is dirty, bright sunshine is nearly fatal to it, and fly or prawn would have a better chance.

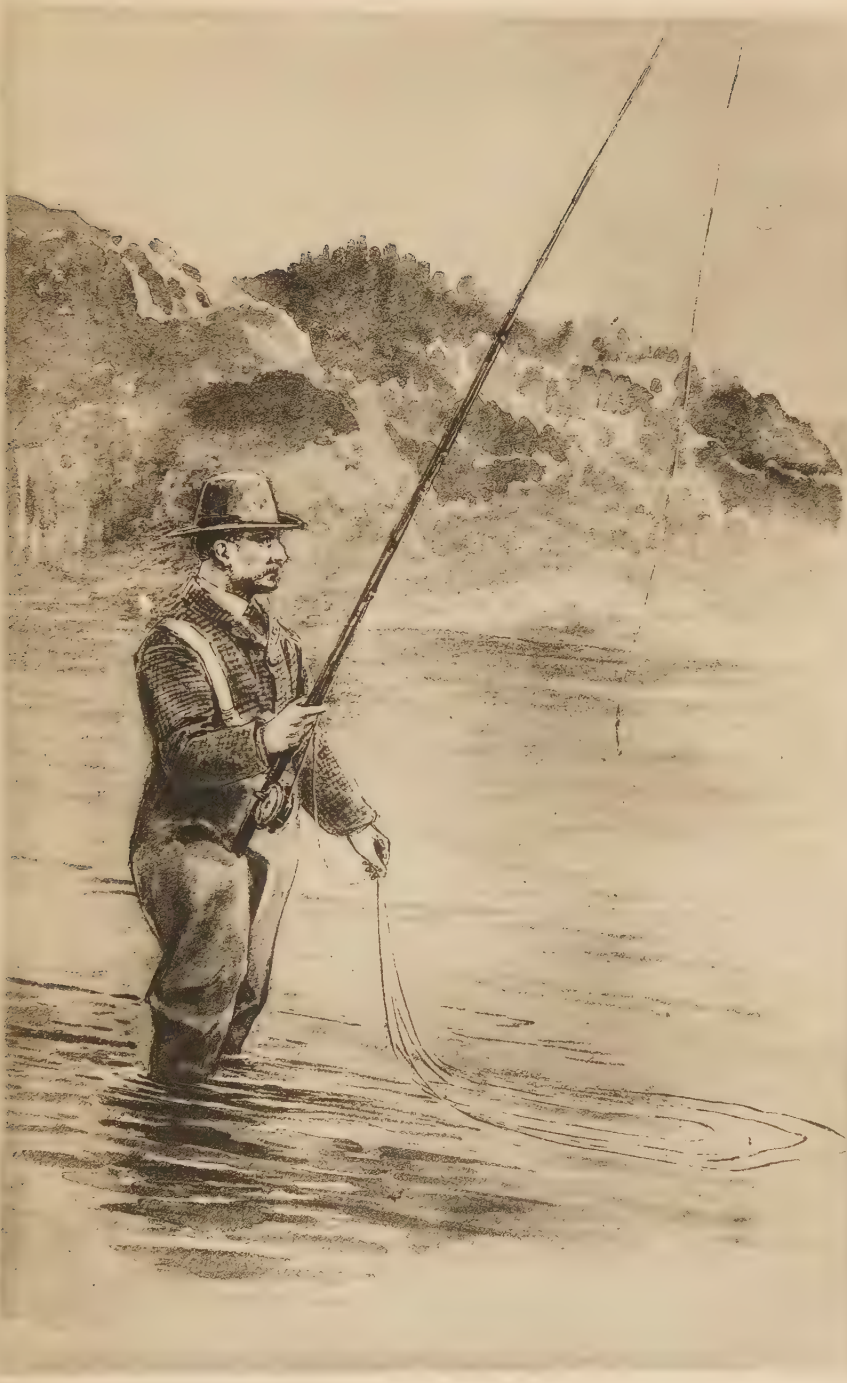
Our experience is that the minnow will kill well on all rivers running into the sea on the East Coast of Scotland, and that it is of no use on any river emptying itself into the sea on the West Coast, where the worm and the phantom are the best bait lures.

It goes without saying, that Brown's phantom will kill anywhere, and in highly coloured and nearly dirty water it is the best bait of all.

The natural minnow is usually cast directly across the stream, but if the current is heavy it should be directed a little upwards to ensure it sinking deep; as it is carried round by the stream, it should be drawn slowly in and out with a sawing motion of

the hand, and without any reeling up of the line. As soon as it swings into a straight line with the point of the rod, draw it in, take two steps forward and cast again, and so on till the end of the pool.

So long as the line can be deposited in coils on a grassy bank at the feet of the fisherman, it is child's play to send out some twenty yards; but as soon as it is necessary to wade, this becomes quite another matter, and requires a lot of practice to do well. The process is somewhat difficult to describe. The butt of the rod should rest high up on the inside of the thigh, and as much line should be pulled off the reel as the stream will float on the surface in the shape of a loop; nip this between the thumb and forefinger, repeat the operation, but make the loop shorter than the first; again secure it, and continue to do this till there are four or five loops floating on the surface, and kept away from the angler by the force of the current; then sweep the rod from the thigh as if casting from the bank, and at the same time slightly raise the hand holding the loops,



MINNOW FISHER.

and the whole line will fly out smoothly. When the stream is not flowing smartly past the angler, he will have to make more and shorter coils. We once saw a gentleman, unable to master this method of casting, who had a tray of wicker-work hung by straps across his shoulders and standing out in front of him, and on this his line was coiled. It certainly answered very well, but he was chaffed out of it, by being promptly christened "brandy balls," from his ridiculous likeness to the well-known old character at Brighton, who for so many years promenaded the King's Road there, with his case of sweeties sticking out in front of him.

It is often a matter of difficulty to procure minnows large enough, for they should be three inches long at the very least. During the summer months there are plenty of this size in the Dee, but in winter and spring they entirely disappear, either going up the burns or sinking into deep, quiet holes from which they do not stir till the water gets warm, and the latter proceeding is most likely the solution of the

problem as to where they vanish to. Joseph Loveder, Full Moon Inn, Fish Ponds, Bristol, is the only man we know of who can supply very large minnows in spring, and the journey to Scotland is usually made without the loss of a single one. When ordering, it is best to give as long a notice as possible, for each minnow has to be caught by hook and line; and thus if several hundreds are required, it means catching fully a thousand. The charge is a pound a hundred, and they are forwarded in tins which will easily take two hundred in each; and whether these cans are kept or returned is optional. The minnows should be kept in soft running water, and beware of spring water, for we have seen whole canfuls killed in a few hours by hard water. A flow of water should pass continually through their prison, and about once a week a small quantity of oatmeal should be given them. They are, of course, carried to the river in a smaller tin, which should be placed in the water while the cast is fished, care being taken to fix it so that it cannot be blown or washed away. We

have watched numbers of salmon seize this lure, and as a rule it is taken as it swings to straighten the curve of the line, and is a matter of deliberation, though there are occasions when the bait is seized the instant it touches the water. As soon as the fish is hooked, the minnow is blown up the line; and if not bitten in half, two or three fish may be landed with the same bait.

It is a rare event to get a pluck whilst drawing in the line to make a fresh cast, and if such does happen, then nineteen times in twenty it will be a kelt that is hooked. It is of little use spinning the natural bait in a stream so rapid as to keep it close to the surface, for, apart from the reality of the lure and the small show made by the arming, the depth to which it can be sunk is also a great secret of success; therefore, to repeat the expression we gave Mr. Pennell, it is of little use fishing a heavy stream which, as it were, *tears* at the bait.

The two best fishers of the natural minnow I have met are my old friends Mr. Digby Cayley and

Mr. George Whitehead; and I believe it was the former who first introduced this lure to the Dee, and on this head he writes me the following characteristic letter:—

"As to the 'Yorkshire Grey,' I really believe I was practically the originator of its use for salmon. Twenty-five years ago, when fishing for trout with natural minnow on fine gut, with thirty yards of line, I found I was continually hooking and generally getting broken by salmon, and I set to work to develop appliances to prevent the latter casualty, little thinking it would turn out the success it has become. The first time I went to the Dee, viz., to Ballater, some sixteen years ago, I took with me, simply on spec., a can of some fifty minnows. This was on March 31st. The gillies laughed me to scorn! They had never heard of such a thing, but said they had known kelts hooked with a phantom in water too big and thick for a fly. In low, clear water, with twenty degrees of frost every night, I soon found that, as usual, the local artists did not know everything,

and pulled out two or three daily with the 'Grey Eagle,' to their astonishment.

"Patterns of my tackle were begged from me by numbers of people. George Whitehead got it from me that year at Ballater, and took it to Aboyne, and thence it spread, till it is universally used now not only on the Dee but on many other rivers.

"I have been cursed and called a poacher, &c., &c., but I have become callous, and am sure it was envy of my success, and nothing else, that prompted such feelings. I used in those days to fish every pool first with a fly, generally with two different flies, and then with the minnow, often getting one to six fish out of a pool in which I had had no rise to a fly. I am speaking of April, which, in my opinion, is the worst fly month on the Dee, though there are the most fish. I have thrice killed sixteen in a day on the Dee, and one year at Ballater—the last I was there, I think 1882—I got 133 fish in the month of April, and thirty-eight in the first three days, all, or nearly all, with minnow. I consider that the fact that it has

more than doubled bags, has raised the rental value of the Dee fishings considerably. When told that it is unsportsmanlike to use it, I reply to my abuser that if he wishes to be consistent he has no right to use a breechloader, but should adhere to flint and steel, or the bow and arrow.

"My experience is that it is taken best in a big clear water and in cold weather. The Malloch reel has simplified the casting for beginners; before that reel came out, the casting of thirty yards from the hand was an art not easily acquired, and many gave it up in disgust in consequence, but any muff can now fish the minnow tolerably with the Malloch reel.

"There is a general idea that it ruins a pool for anything else, but that is not at all the case, though I would not care to fish a pool with either fly or minnow after prawn or worm. They sometimes take it well in October, though not to such a certainty as in spring, for owing to the water being warmer the fly is taken freely in that month, and when they do that I prefer it, although one loses many more fish."

George Whitehead and his eldest son had an extraordinary good day at Glen Tana, in May, 1888, on the beats above Dinnet Bridge. He writes me:—

"I was on the south side, and my son on the north; and at lunch time he had killed nine with the fly, and I had only seven with the minnow. After that I got eleven more, and he did not get another—total twenty-seven for the day. It may interest you to know that about twenty years ago, while trailing for pollack, I hooked and landed a salmon of eleven pounds, and the nearest rivers were the Humber and the Esk, the former over forty miles off and the latter over thirty."

Sir William Cunliffe Brooks' famous fisherman, "Boatie" Stevens, has equalled these performances with the fly alone, and as an all-round caster of the fly is the best man I have ever come across, for he is equally good at overhead and underhand casting.

The prawn is fished in much the same way as the minnow, and the rod that does for the one will

serve for all other baits. Swivels should be dispensed with, and the line is weighted according to the strength and depth of the stream to be fished; and by this also the size of the prawn is determined.

There are various prawn tackles in use, but we prefer two triangles close together, one of which lies under the head of the prawn and the other a little way lower down. The hooks should be painted red, which is done by making a saturated solution of scarlet sealing-wax, dissolved in spirits of wine. Fine orange silk should be used to secure the prawn to the tackle, and if well put on and not seized it will last all day, and even the next one too. The cast is made rather more down stream than if using a minnow; the point of the rod should be lowered to the water, and no motion given to the bait till it comes to the end of the swing; but then, before drawing it in, the rod should slowly rise and fall a few times, and it is often at this moment that a fish will hook.

This is a good summer and low river bait, and will kill in the brightest sunshine and clearest water; but

at times we have also done well with it in heavy and dirty water.

In baiting the prawn tackle, that part of the end of the needle to which the gut loop is tied should be tightly lashed to the gut of the hooks, and if this is done well the bait will never slip up the needle.

In still, deep pools, where there is hardly any current and the bottom is smooth, the common boiled shrimp is often most deadly if used on a small worm hook, passed in at the throat and brought out at the bend of the tail, the curl of which will cover the barb. A good-sized bullet should be placed about two feet above the shrimp, and all that need be done is to drop it in the pool and wait events. If nothing happens in a few minutes, lift it up and pop it in again ten yards lower down ; in summer and in suitable pools, with plenty of fish, it is usually a certain if not very skilful way of getting a few. On the Usk in July and August it was found to be so deadly that it was abolished on the Association waters. At the time this was done the

river was so low and the weather so hot and bright that no angler had killed a fish for a fortnight, and in despair the shrimp was tried, with the result of an average of half-a-dozen a day to the introducer of the bait. The Association, having promptly put an end to this sort of sport, immediately proceeded to *net the pools* on the plea of their being over-stocked, and report said the proceeds were sold for the benefit of the Club funds! Many members and day ticket-holders were, however, of opinion that it would have been fairer to allow the use of baits during the months of July and August, than to take the fish from the river by nets.

Anyone who has once become an enthusiast about salmon will contrive to pursue his favourite sport in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds. There is the well-known case of the late Mr. Fawcett, the Member for Brighton, who, although rendered totally blind by a shooting accident, yet remained a keen fisherman. There was a Mr. Clifford who used to fish the Usk Association waters very successfully from the

MAKING THE BEST OF IT

back of a donkey, and the Jerusalem steed learnt his business so well that he would advance a step at each cast. On the Dee there was a one-armed fisherman who did everything for himself, and killed numbers of salmon. And all these three are instances of how deep a root the love of the sport can take. It has, however, still remained for my old friend Captain H. Shaw Kennedy (he being unable to walk owing to serious illness) to embark on a new method of making the best of it!

"This spring of 1891," he writes me from Suisgill Lodge, Kildonan, "I don't think many fellows have hooked a fish fairly casting from a bath chair, and then had thirty minutes run along the bank over a roughish country before landing him; but I cannot walk a yard yet and am forced to get about in this way, and the other day I got down to a good pool with smooth, grassy banks and landed two salmon from my chair. You would have died of laughing had you been looking on, as we nearly went into the river two or three times, apple-cart and all."

In taking leave of our fishing friends, we cannot refrain from indulging in a lament at the falling off in sport on all Scotch rivers, especially since 1886. We cannot understand why five such fine rivers as the Earn, the Deveron, the Findhorn, the Don, and the North Esk should never be allowed to yield spring fishing for the rod, for on all these five rivers the spring angling is not let at any appreciable price, and to catch a fresh run fish on any of them is quite an event, and only keepers and a few residents on the banks try the experiment. Yet at the mouths of each of these rivers hundreds and hundreds of clean fish are netted each spring. Those two splendid rivers—the Tay and the Spey—are not very much better off as regards early salmon, and the spring angling on either is but a half-hearted business, and confined also chiefly to keepers and gillies. The ancient reputation of these two rivers will, however, yet tempt a certain number of anglers to rent fishings on them each season; but it is rarely any return for a second dose, and anyone knowing Speyside and Tayside has only to read the

reports in the *Field* and the *Scotsman* to see that for one gentleman there are five keepers at work—a fact which speaks more strongly than anything else of the wretched sport to be had.

To all these seven rivers there surely must be upper proprietors, and are they, then, indifferent to the value of their rod-fishings, or do they stand in with the man at the nets? It is quite certain if a fair share of spring fish were allowed to ascend the first five mentioned rivers, that then a stretch of two miles of water on a good part of any of them would be worth from a hundred to two hundred pounds for the spring angling! The total length of these five nearly fishless streams is, roughly, two hundred and fifty miles, and of this there is at least a hundred miles of right good fishing water, but so close is the netting that we do not think the united spring salmon fishings of the whole five lets for three hundred pounds! Now, if the same length of spring fishing could be added to the Dee, the Helmsdale, the Thurso, or the Garry of Loch Oich, they would

certainly, at the most moderate calculation, realize five thousand pounds!

The Dee is one of the best spring salmon rivers in Scotland, and this has been brought about by the wisdom of the upper proprietors, who, joining together, have bought the lower nets off the river. We can remember when first staying with our old friend and very good angler, the late Mr. Thomas G. Simpson, at Blackhall Castle on the Dee, that the nets used to work right up to Banchory Bridge, which is some twenty-two miles from the mouth, and between there and the railway bridge at Aberdeen, some dozen others were hard at work. These, by degrees, have all been bought up, and now no nets exist on the Dee above the suspension bridge of the granite city.

It is strange a proceeding so practical has not had more imitators, as the result has been highly beneficial to the upper proprietors, either in the shape of increased sport or big rents. Only fancy the Tweed, the Tay, and the Spey all WELL stocked with spring fish, and that, instead of going to these rivers in the

autumn and paying large sums for the privilege of hauling out numbers of red and gravid fish, that one could be sure of similar sport in the spring time with the strong, wild, and desperate-fighting bars of silver fresh from the sea! What prices such fisheries would bring to the lucky owners, and what fun they would give to those able to pay for them! Of all Scotch rivers we consider the Spey is the grandest for the angler, but in spite of that it is the one of all others that has gone most hopelessly to the bad, though sad to say there are plenty but a little way behind it in the race for annihilation. In addition to excessive netting and the rough treatment of kelts returning to the sea, which is telling a tale on all rivers alike, the splendid Spey has another drawback to contend against in the incessant par catching carried on by the riparian population. A right of free trout fishing is claimed, and as this has never been contested in a superior court, it is mercilessly exercised, and each village and farmhouse sends forth anglers in plenty; most of them are pleasant-spoken, decent bodies, but among

so many it is needless to say there are some black sheep, men who will glory in stepping into a salmon pool and fishing it with trout flies right in front of the salmon angler; and who, if asked to desist, will be prolific in abuse and bad language. These are the rascals who slip on a salmon fly the moment they think it safe to do so, and should they land a well-mended kelt, it is sure to be knocked on the head and hidden till they can return for it at night. In addition, however, to the man angler, each village sends out troops of boys to catch par. We think we hear our readers exclaim: "Oh, no; that cannot be right, as the Act of Parliament protects them;" but, alas! on the Spey it does nothing of the kind; it throws its shield over the *smolt* only, which is a par in the silver coat it takes for a few months before going to the sea. The Act does not even mention the poor par; and yet there can be no smolts without par, which stay in the rivers from two to three years before becoming smolts. Thus the boys and the girls of the species are protected, but the defenceless babies in arms may be

massacred! Truly, this is a clever and far-seeing Act of Parliament. The little village urchins, therefore, catch thousands of par each season, and between Rothes and Aberlour one can daily see some twenty to thirty of them all thus busily engaged. That each lad will easily get a couple of dozen a day may be taken as certain. We saw one boy with fully fifteen dozen to his own rod, and as there are two hundred and ten days in the Spey fishing season, if but twenty-five lads are out daily and get but two dozen each, they will take 125,000 par, and this is on only seven miles of water. Now, if one par in every two hundred grew into a salmon, that alone would rob the river of six hundred and twenty-five fish; but there are fully (we believe a great deal more) thirty-five miles of the Spey fished in this abominable and wasteful manner, and thus, if our calculation is anything near correct, half a million par are annually killed, and the river robbed of over three thousand salmon each year. Whether we are even approaching real fact in supposing it takes two

hundred par to make a salmon, there is no possible means of ascertaining, but it is making a liberal allowance for the chapter of accidents incidental to par life, for it must not be forgotten they are sweet to salmon, trout, herons, and gulls; and in the sea they doubtlessly have other enemies we know not of. These boy anglers are of course not very particular, and should they catch a smolt instead of a par all go into the basket alike; and though there are plenty of water bailiffs on the Spey, we believe we are correct in stating there has never yet been a prosecution on Speyside for smolt catching!

Old fishermen tell us the par of the salmon have an orange-coloured, adipose fin, the par of the sea trout a yellow one, and the par of the river trout a black one. We are not aware if this has ever been ascertained to be correct; it is a matter the large fish hatcheries should be able to set at rest, but certainly there are the three different coloured, adipose fins.

The Spey trouters claim their right on the ground

that it is a navigable river; that every such river has a public right of way, and that where such exists the public have the right of fishing for trout. Now, the only navigation on the Spey has been in the shape of rafts going down it, and whether such constitutes a navigable river is a question for the lawyers. To all ordinary mortals the word "navigable" implies shipping, or at least boats going both up and down a river for the purposes of commerce, and all dictionaries we have searched explain the verb "to navigate" as "passing by ships or boats." As there are two good fishings on the Spey, each rented by distinguished judges, viz., Sir A. L. Smith and Sir Ford North, we should much like to hear their opinions on the matter; but, failing any intimation of their views, we cannot help thinking if a case were fought in a superior court that the trouters would lose the day. The Tay and the Dee are both fully as much navigable as the Spey, and yet on neither of these is the right claimed. On the latter river the matter has had the bad luck to be made a political question,

and none of the proprietors seem inclined to move. The destruction of these numberless par could, however, be easily prevented, if the Fishery Board would make a bye-law to the effect that no fish whatsoever should be taken from the river that was not eight inches long.

We do not think the trouters would lose much if even a case at law went against them, for none of those who are well behaved would be denied permission, although it would enable the proprietors to put a check on the offensive and poaching members of the fraternity.

The Countess of Seafield, the Duke of Richmond, and Sir George Macpherson Grant of Ballindalloch, virtually own the bulk of the salmon rod-fishings of the Spey, and if they jointly so willed, it is certain they could devise some method of restoring the lost prestige to this magnificent river. In our humble opinion, the only thorough way to meet the present system of close and scientific netting on any river is to lengthen the weekly close time. Many people

imagine a salmon becomes a sort of aqueous race-horse the moment he leaves the salt water, and ceases not to wag fins and tail till he is a long way up the river. As a matter of fact, nothing of the kind takes place, and in cold spring weather his progress in fresh water is decidedly slow, and it is doubtful if he travels more than seven or eight miles in the twenty-four hours.

Such being the case, a net ten miles above the mouth of a river has practically no close time at all, for the fish entering on Sunday are still below that net on Monday at six o'clock a.m., and are sure to be stopped by it.

There is no doubt the poor kelts are very roughly treated by many of the net men; of necessity they must be caught several times a day, and we have it from eye-witnesses they are often flung or kicked back to the water with violence, and during the night netting many well-mended ones are knocked on the head for clean fish.

Now, an animal or a bird that had been caught

several times and roughly handled would certainly not revisit the scene of torture, and it is quite possible kelts may be imbued with a similar instinct, and so fight shy of returning to their rivers until driven to do so by the laws of Nature; and keepers have told us that of late years the autumn fish have not appeared as early as usual, but have arrived in November and commenced spawning operations at once. It is possible that this may be one of the many causes which has made the autumn fishings of the last few seasons so very poor.

The whole question between upper and lower proprietors has always been a vexed one, and is likely to remain so. For the last five years the latter have had things pretty much their own way, and the only hope for the angler appears to be the somewhat forlorn one, that excessive netting may kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. We believe, that if an extra twenty-four hours' close time was made law, that as soon as it had had time to bear fruit, the netsmen would catch as much and even more in the

five days than they now do in the six. Our views have been spoken plainly, and probably they are not worth much, but if we have in our love for sport unwittingly trodden on anyone's toes, we humbly ask forgiveness. Every year seems to throw more light on the habits of the salmon, but we are yet fully convinced our interest is reciprocated, and that they know more about us than we know about them, and that year by year they become more alive to the flash of the rod, the shine of the gaff, and the glitter of the lure.

The end of our amusement is now at hand, and we will but wish our readers more thirty-pounders and more tight lines in the spring-time than have been frequent of late years; and if these pages have helped anyone to get better sport, or while away a little spare time, their object will have been fully answered.

THE END.

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234